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# SUNDAY.

W. W. TULLOCH, B.D.  
 EDITOR.

# TALK.

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# SUNDAY TALK.

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JUNE, 1884.

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# Sunday Talk.

NEW SERIES.

JUNE, 1884.

ELINOR.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

## CHAPTER I.



**E**LINOR, you will not forget your promise?"

"Never, mamma."

What would not one say to smooth the narrow pathway of death to a mother, to a woman dying in the fulness of her days, while life was still so bright, and leaving husband, chil-

self, but made her provisions with a sense that they would never be needed. She had not been a woman used to self-denial. All had gone very smoothly with her in her life. She had been born rich, she had married well. It is true that her life had been more or less a suffering one for years. She had borne a great many children, and had passed a great deal of her time, if not with enjoyment, at least with great content in her bed-room or on a sofa—petted, pitied, and indulged in all her fancies by everybody about her. Every device of comfort and luxurious ease had been sought for her: her husband, himself a man fond of the open-air, a country gentleman and sportsman, with a thousand things to occupy him, scarcely ever came into her presence without an offering of some sort or other. If he sometimes missed her society, and pitied himself for having to go into the world without her, there was, in the depths of his heart, a conviction that delicacy and incapacity were becoming things in a woman. He admired her all the more. He spoke of "your mother" to the children with a sort of adoring awe. She could do no wrong in his eyes. That she should want many things was right and befitting; it was almost a favour to him thus to put it in his power to do much for her, to surround her with luxuries. When the key-note is thus struck by the master of the house, everything falls into harmony, and Mrs. Percival was an object of semi-adoration by all about her. She took it very sweetly, being a gentle creature by nature, one of those of whom people say that they cannot be spoiled. Yet the universal homage had its natural effect upon her. She took it for granted that everything was to yield to her wishes. Had it been said in Armstead, or near it, that Mrs. Percival was an egoist, there would have been one universal outcry of indignation. The terms that were applied to her were the very reverse of this. "So unselfish," people said. It is the right word in all cases to apply to women, and it was thought to be doubly true in her case. She never thought of herself; there was no occasion, for every-

dren—all that was known and familiar behind her? Of all the wonderful things in this strange world, there is nothing more wonderful than the calm with which human creatures go out of it. They fear their going before it comes, as we all do, with a natural alarm. And how natural is that alarm! Even to those who have no fear of the judgment to come, which has such terrors for some, what a thing it is to go away from everything known and tangible—from all the familiar ways of life, from sweet companionship and love—into the world where all is unknown; and yet with what composure, when the moment comes, most of us do it, forgetting anxieties, troubles, fears altogether, and passing, without a tremor, the barrier between the seen and unseen! Mrs. Percival was still at some distance from that solemn step. It was not thought even that her case was hopeless, and in the depths of her soul she did not think so her-

body thought of her. But the distinction is too subtle to be noted by the general mind, and this was Mrs. Percival's character far and wide.

Yet she had an expectation, a certainty, fostered by every act of everybody about her, that her comfort and satisfaction were the objects most important in the world. She never put this into words—it was a consciousness overlying everything, promoted and strengthened by everything round; and what so natural as that she should act upon it when, from the safe and simple invalidism of so many years, she floated, all at once, within sight of death! Her latest child was but a few weeks old, and to leave that infant motherless was a terrible thought. At least in theory it was

a terrible thought: and the gentle mother, playing a little with the idea which as yet was not real to her, and feeling a kind of pensive enjoyment in imagining the pathos of her own early death had made an appeal to the devotion of her eldest girl, now seated beside her, with a heart full of natural

woe and profound tenderness. She had pledged Elinor never to leave the baby—never to let the little one feel that it had no mother: and the girl's response had been made with enthusiasm and tears—"Oh! never, never! whatever it might cost, whatever might happen." They had kissed each other, and wept together a little, and the mother had smiled through her tears, and wrung her daughter's heart by suggestions of the time when she should be gone. "You will fill my place, my dearest; you will be a mother to them all; and poor papa, Elinor, how he will miss me. I have not been a wife like many others, able to go out with him, to ride with him, to enter into all he is doing——"

"Oh, mamma, you have been an angel to him and to us all."

The poor lady smiled with tender emotion. She was beautiful in her weakness, more beautiful, perhaps, than she had been in her best days, her eyes large and bright with pain, her colour so delicate, her fair hair curling about her forehead, which was not the fashion of these times. She accepted the admiration of her child as the utterance of love. "You have all made the best of me always," she said. "Oh, my darling, you will try to be a comfort to him when I am gone. Already you are a great comfort. You are more mistress of the house than I have been for years. Elinor, you must never abandon your father."

"Abandon him? oh, no." Elinor had—no,

not started: that was too energetic a movement for the sick-room: but she had stirred involuntarily in her chair, and her eyes had a very startled expression. Abandon him; that meant leaving him in his trouble, giving him up altogether, affording no help. Oh, no! she could never, in any cir-



"She stooped down and kissed the thin hand."

cumstances, do that. But there was in her mind a momentary self-explanation, a pause almost imperceptible, before she replied.

"You will never leave him," continued the mother, fixing her feverish eyes on Elinor's face. "Oh, think what a task for him, a man with all these little children. How could he ever do it? and your dear papa, he is not a man that knows how to devote himself like some men. He must have his pleasure. He must have his exercise, and—he is too fond of racing and of horses, Elinor!"

"Yes, mamma."

Mrs. Percival laid her thin, white, hot hand upon her daughter's. "He is not a man that can



do by himself. He has been the kindest husband that ever lived. Oh, what he has done for me! And you must repay him, Elinor. Promise me."

"Mamma, why should you imagine things that will never be wanted? You will take care of him, and he of you."

The poor sick lady smiled and sighed. She believed this in her heart, but still—"If it should prove so, oh, my dear, I will be very thankful," she said, "for to leave one's children is hard: but you will not deny me the comfort—it will be a comfort—to know that whatever happens my Elinor will always be here, that you will never leave him. My darling, you must never leave him. Promise me. That will make me die happy, if I have to die."

"I will promise anything that will make you happy, mamma."

The girl did not look at her mother, and her answer was made very low. She stooped down and kissed the thin hand which she held within her own. Her words were not said with enthusiasm, for Elinor perceived the full force of what she was giving, though the mother had little perception of what she was asking: but the kiss was a sort of sacramental seal and pledge of devotion. Mrs. Percival smiled with that dazzling illumination of weakness which lights up the countenances of the dying, and stretched out her other arm to draw her daughter to her. "Now, if I must die, I shall die happy," she said.

Elinor was very grave all that day. It was thought, at first, by all who saw her, that the doctors had given an opinion less hopeful of the invalid; but this was not so. There was still good hope that they would, as Dr. Butler said, "pull her through." But Elinor Percival was somewhat serious by nature, and she realised in its full force the pledge she had given. Whether it ever was carried out or not it was a very serious pledge. She had promised to give up her own life, to injure another, to sacrifice her individual hopes, and annul the most important chapter of her existence. It was very strange and painful to her that her mother should have ignored all this. How could she have done it? Mrs. Percival had been proud and pleased, as mothers are, with her child's betrothal so young, and with the object of her choice. It was an excellent match for one thing (which is always pleasing to the parents), and the young man was admirable in every point, handsome, well born, and very much in love. The wooing, the engagement, had been a pleasure to everybody, and but for Mrs. Percival's illness the preparations for the marriage would have been already begun. How could she forget all this? Elinor stole away from her mother's bedside when the sufferer fell asleep, and went out to breathe the air out of doors. It was winter, and the wind was mournful in the bare trees: it seemed to breathe a sighing through the world as if for the death of hope—not any wild sound of storm, but a continuous breath of sadness. Elinor crossed

the park to the little wood which protected the house from the north. The mournful sound suited the tenor of her thoughts. She had all the readiness of generous youth to sacrifice herself; but *how*, how was she to sacrifice him, to tell him that she belonged to him no longer, that her destination was changed, and that she must never leave her father's house? It had seemed to her, a few hours before, that to lose her mother was the most terrible calamity that could come upon her. Perhaps she was not really more sorrowful now than she had been when that possibility was first made apparent to her, but there was a change in the sorrow—a bewilderment, a pang more acute. Was all forgotten that had gone before? Come what might, was he to be no more to her; no longer the comforter to whom she could turn most certainly, but shut out of her life? Such a sudden unsettling of all the foundations of existence have more force in life than the profoundest sorrow. She was bewildered with a sort of hopeless confusion, as if she had suddenly lost the leading line in her existence. When she saw him coming through the wood her heart sank within her. He had been half a lover to her beautiful mother, in admiration and gratitude, as a girl's true lover ought to be; and his face was as anxious as if he had been Mrs. Percival's own son, as he came eagerly along to ask for her, anxious with the anxiety of affection and also with that of disappointed hope, for his own happiness hung (though he did not know how entirely) upon the mother's recovery. When he saw Elinor he quickened his pace, holding out his hands as he approached. "Better?" he cried, as they came within hearing of each other; then, as he came nearer and saw the seriousness of her face, "Worse?" with a sudden clouding over of his eager hopes.

"Little change in any way," Elinor said.

"But why are you so grave, my dearest? Don't they say that every day passed without falling back is so much gain?"

"Yes, Philip."

"And here are three days to the good! Come, that means progress; I can't have you look so dreary. You are tired out, the strain is becoming too much for you. That is what I have feared all along."

"No; not that. I am quite strong; I feel nothing. But I can see how little strength she has. I see better than any one," Elinor said, with a sudden return of that first desolation which overwhelms the young at the first realisation of death. The tears came in a sudden flood to her eyes. They were a relief, but they had all the appearance of a sudden overwhelming crisis of sorrow. He put his arm round her, and supported her tenderly. "My darling!" he said, soothing her, holding her against his breast. To lean against a kind bosom, even if it is only that of a sympathetic friend, is not this the first natural consolation of the mourner? A pitying



"Gave him a look through her tears"—page 71.

woman will always be found to afford that support to a child stricken by the first approach of grief, but when it is the heart that is her own, that is to be her refuge and support all her life? Poor Elinor wept out her tears there and was calmed; then separated hastily from him, and put him away, with a sudden pang more keen and sharp even than her grief. He was startled, and looked anxiously in her face.

"What is it, Elinor? Don't put me away from you."

"Oh! I must not," she said; "I must not give way. I must not cry and be silly. Nobody must see me like this, as if I had given up hope."

"But I am nobody; I am yourself. You have nothing to keep hidden from me."

The poor girl gave him a look through her tears, in which he saw only the sweetest trust, a tender consent to this claim, but in which there was a heart-breaking appeal for which he knew no reason.

They returned to the house together, where he waited till the doctors had come and seen their patient, and again pronounced her "no worse," that most unsatisfactory of all deliverances. "But no worse for three days means just a little better. Come, doctor!" Philip said, as he walked towards the park gates with Dr. Butler. This was not the good old practitioner who kept all the parish in order, but the medical

authority of the county, who came from Shrewsbury every day. He looked back to see that he was out of sight of the house, and then he shook his head.

"I know you are almost a member of the family, but I may speak with more freedom to you," he said. "Mrs. Percival will never be better. She may linger like this for a long time, or she may die quite suddenly. It is one of those

cases in which we cannot pronounce with certainty, except that she is doomed."

"Doctor," said the young man, with tears in his eyes, "this is terrible news."

"Has not Miss Percival told you? I am sure she knows. There are some people who can never be deceived."

"I fancied she thought so; but she is young; she has no experience."

"That girl has a wonderful deal in her—better than experience," the doctor said, with unusual enthusiasm.

"You do not need to tell me that," said the lover, almost angry; and then he added, "Doctor, I hope I am not selfish: but this will bring everything to a standstill."

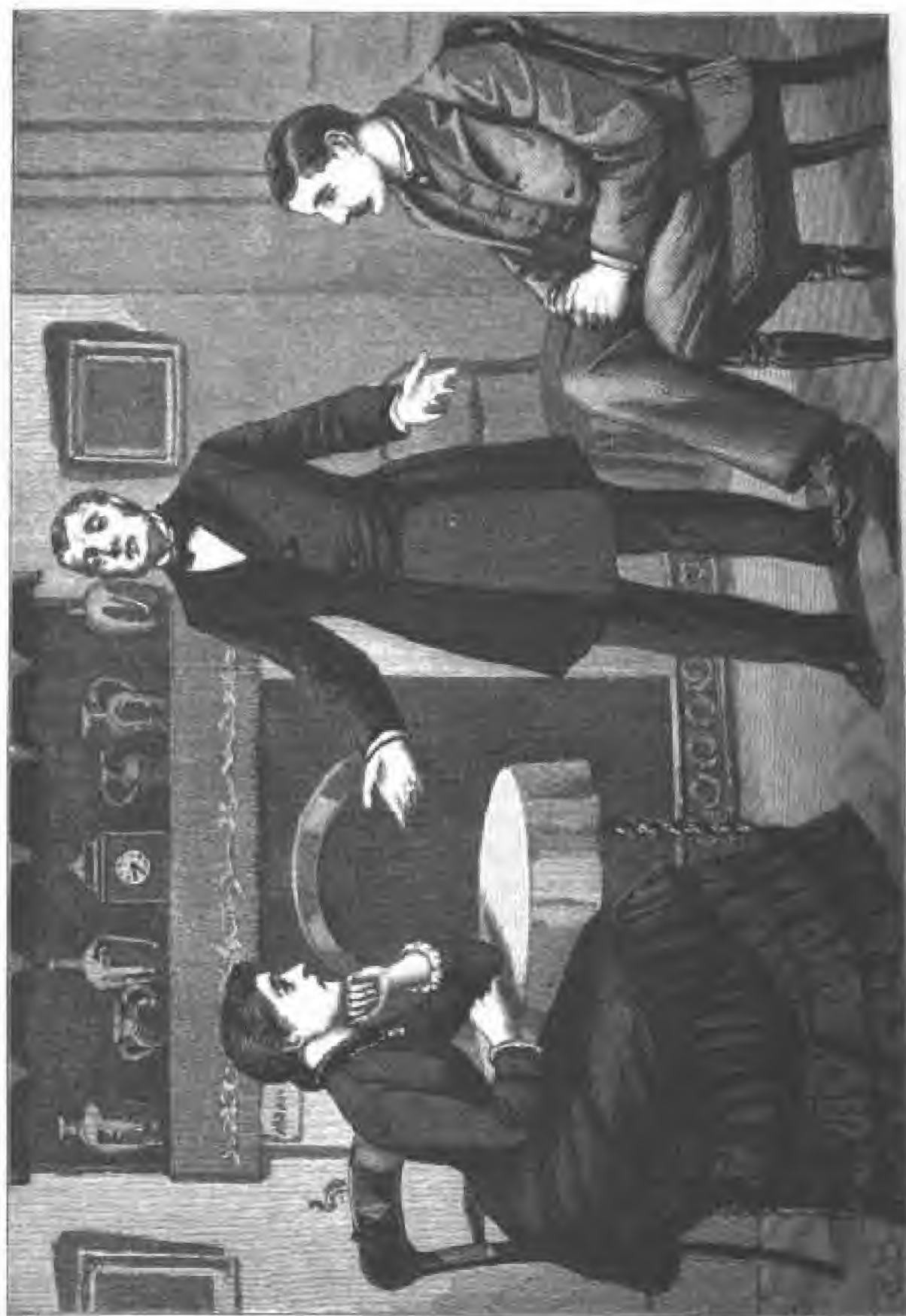
"Poor young fellow," Dr. Butler said, patting him on the shoulder. "I am sorry, very sorry, for you, too."

(To be continued.)



"Poor young fellow!"





"Do I look like a man that requires to be taken care of?"—Illustration, page 102.



# Sunday Talk.

NEW SERIES

JULY, 1884.

ELINOR.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

## CHAPTER II.



**A**FTER all these prognostications of a long and lingering illness, Mrs. Percival was seized with a sudden attack of violent fever, and died that night. She fell into the stupor that precedes death, holding her daughter's hand in hers, and saying, "Elinor, you

will not forget your promise?" with her last breath.

It is needless to describe the miserable excitement of the house, the sudden enlightenment of those who had blindly hoped, the profound gloom that fell on the busy household in which so many human interests had still to be thought of. In the grief of the first loss all other considerations disappeared for the moment; and even Philip Hamlyn forgot that his marriage must be put off, and all his plans unsettled. It was only after the first period of mourning was over that it became possible at all to consider this question, and then Elinor was swallowed up in the arrangements of the family. The lover found it more difficult to see her, to have the comfort of those long talks which are the life of love, than it had been when, in addition to the charge of the

children, she had her sick mother to nurse and care for. She had been for a long time the virtual mistress of the house, yet had always found leisure for him, if it was but for a moment now and then. But as the dreary winter glided away in mourning and tears, and spring came on, it seemed to poor Philip that every day his betrothed had less time to spare for him, and less desire to make occasions of seeing him. It was bad enough to have to wait; but if Elinor was growing indifferent, if she no longer wanted him, this was still more difficult, more difficult to bear. When he had the luck to find her one day without occupation, he poured forth all the trouble that was in his heart.

"It is not only that you have so much to do," he said. "I did not trouble you, did I? at first. I knew you must want to be with the children, to do everything for them for *her* sake; but that cannot last for ever, Elinor. They have their nurses and their governess, just as they used to have in former days. But I—I have got nothing but you; and I have to do without you—you don't care to be with me, Elinor. That is the worst of all. I think you would rather I did not come. You don't want me; you prefer——"

"Oh! Philip, you are very cruel."

"Am I, dear? If that is all I will beg your pardon on my knees. Is it only that I am unreasonable? Elinor, is that all? But you do not look at me. You turn your head away."

"Philip," she said, with a trembling voice, "you are not unreasonable, and I am not unfaithful. Oh, no; don't start so at the word. There are other things that must make a difference. How could you think I prefer anything in this world to you? but circumstances are against us." She turned her head away, and put up her hand, he saw, furtively, to get rid of a tear.

"Circumstances?" he said. "You mean this sad trouble which should bring us nearer, which should make you and me all the more——"

"It does, it does," she said, almost under her breath.

"And yet you turn me away; you avoid me, Elinor. What is it, then, that comes between us, dear? I would not hurry or vex you for the world: but I am not better than my neighbours," said Philip. "I want what is my own."

She had her head turned away, gazing vacantly through the window at the smiling landscape outside. The winter was gone, with all its woes, and spring was blossoming into summer; the trees waving green in the sunshine, the lilac bushes sweet with bloom, the white hawthorn dotting the green of the park. She looked out upon these lovely things without seeing them—her mind beholding another scene: the darkened sick room, the gaze of her mother's feverish eyes. Her lover gazed at her with eyes as anxious, full of wonder and pain, without being able to divine what was the cause of her abstracted looks. It was not indifference, she said; what then could it be? Meanwhile Elinor was collecting her courage.

"I must speak to you plainly," she said. "Oh, Philip, do not make my duty more hard to me. It is hard. I cannot help it: it is almost more than I can bear. Philip, I promised mamma——"

"What—about the baby? Yes, I know. Did you think I was such a brute, such a clod, as to object to that? No, no. She is part of you; she is part of us. I am looking forward to the baby," he said, with a smile, with an effort to persuade himself that this was all; but yet it was very evident that this was not all.

"Philip," she said, faintly, "oh, wait a little; don't be so hasty. I promised my mother on her deathbed——"

"What, what?"

"Never——" she said, with a deep breath more sad than a sigh; "oh, Philip, forgive me, you have a right to be angry, but how was I to refuse anything to her dying? I promised—never to leave papa."

The young man rose to his feet with a sort of mechanical motion. He repeated the words after her, "Never to leave——" then paused, looking at her with bewildered eyes. "What does that mean? That means—what? I think I must be dreaming, Elinor!"

She turned her head away from him, looking again with that vacant, blank gaze upon the landscape without. For all her life after, the waving green of spring, the grass covered with daisies, was to Elinor associated with nothing but pain.

Then he came nearer and caught her hand, and drew her towards him. "Perhaps——" he said, "for you could not mean to cast me off altogether, to break my heart; surely you could not mean that—there is another explanation. Tell me what it means. Oh, I will not be hard upon you: I will not be jealous; but tell me, tell me what it means."

Then she described to him as best she could what had taken place. Her mother was enshrined in Elinor's mind with all that sacredness which surrounds the dead. She could not bear a word, a thought of blame; and yet her own mind was too clear, her intelligence too good not to perceive that what had been extorted from her was a wrong both to herself and Philip. She was the apologist as well as the sacrifice, using all her simple powers to show that there was nothing selfish, nothing extreme in the demand of the dying woman for her own young life and all her hopes. This task made Elinor a sophist in spite of herself, and her sophistry was but half comprehended by the angry, disappointed young man, to whom it seemed impossible that she should produce so many excuses, so many reasons for the sacrifice, unless she herself was satisfied to make it. He listened in silence while she went on, stammering at first, then gradually acquiring the fluency of an advocate who hopes, by many words, to make up for the badness of his case. It was not till he had heard her to the end that he made any reply—and then it was with some bitterness that he spoke.

"I don't know," he said, "what there is left for me to do. It seems all settled without me. Did it never occur to you that you were making an end of me altogether? Did you never think of me at all? Did she—— No, I will not say anything to hurt you. But you, you, Elinor, that were mine, or whom I supposed to be mine——"

"Philip, don't be unjust to me."

"Am I unjust? I can't tell. For me, I should have let the world go to pieces rather than leave you. Anything with you, but nothing without you! That is what I should have said: and without a struggle, without a protest, you give me up—put me aside altogether."

"If you choose to think so," she said, feeling cruelly the sharpness of the wrong he did her. And then she covered her face with her hands, her strength being exhausted, and gave way to the long-restrained, long-accumulating tears. They had not been a pair of lovers who quarrelled, and this experience was altogether new and terrible to both. It is needless to say that all his wrath fled at the sight of her tears. He flew to her side in instant compunction. He who had sworn never to let the winds of heaven breathe on her roughly, that he should be the cause of further pain to her in her mourning and grief! And it was thus they were found by her father, who came suddenly into the room a quarter of an hour after. Mr. Percival was a man of lively but no profound feelings. No one could be more kind—no one could have indulged more completely or surrounded with care and tenderness more thoughtful, the waning days of his delicate wife, as for a little while he had been prostrated by her



"Then he came nearer and caught her hand, and drew her towards him."

death. But by this time he had regained his spirits, and life had resumed its usual tenor. He was able to take comfort in the thought that it was "far better for her" not to linger out an invalid existence, and that it was his duty, both to himself and his children, to be cheerful, and to acknowledge that everything was for the best. He came in briskly, with a pleasant smell of the fresh air about him, the colour of health in his cheeks, and vigour and vitality in the very sound of his footsteps. He had "borne up better than could have been expected," everybody said, and, indeed, had begun, as what he felt to be a duty, to taste again the

pleasures of life. He was startled to see the group on the sofa, the agitation and flush in



Philip's face, the tears and paleness of Elinor. "What is the matter?" he cried, in his hearty voice. "You have surely never quarrelled, you two, at this time of day?"

"Quarrelled!" they both said—Philip with indignation, Elinor with a sigh. "No, sir," said the young man; "it is far more serious than a quarrel. I have been behaving like a brute to her, and making her cry. But when you hear——"

"As for that, you will probably make her cry a great deal more before you are done with her," said the father, with a laugh. "You don't expect to live always in the Elysian fields. But Nelly is not of the crying kind."

"I must tell your father, Elinor," he said; "it is my right, and it is his. You cannot go and bind yourself without us. Sir, she has promised to her mother——"

This name made them all pause, the loss was so recent, and involuntarily Philip's voice sank, and he looked up with a little alarm in Mr. Percival's face, which turned suddenly grave, and paled a little out of the ruddy hues of restored peace. The squire bowed his head slightly, and said, "She can have promised nothing that is not good to her mother."

"Good, sir!" said Philip, "could I ever doubt that?—but when you hear. What she has promised is the same as throwing me off. Dear Mrs. Percival was always kind to me. She said she was glad when Elinor and I—— And do you think, if she had considered, she would ever have taken a promise which could separate from me——?"

Elinor shook her head again and again, but yet her eyes turned with a certain anxiety to her father. He was the only person who had any power to absolve her. If he forbade it, would she carry out the sacrifice? And yet she did not believe that he would do it. She interposed faintly at this point. "Papa, you know I promised about baby; and then—after——"

"The baby! Well," he said, "I don't care that a child of mine should be dependent on any one, even you, Philip. But if your dear mother said so, Nelly, you shall have the baby. You will be a second mother to her, poor little thing. I don't see that I have any right to stand in her way."

"But that is not all," Elinor said, faltering. "Mamma could not bear that you should be left alone. She thought the children would be too much for you. She thought—— And it is all true, papa. How are you to do with them all, so young, without me?"

At this he half smiled, yet showed also a cloud upon his countenance. "You think, like so many people, that you are indispensable," he said. "Of course I shall miss you, Nelly; but I shall get on as other people do in my deplorable position." He looked so ruddy and strong that there

was something almost absurd in the minor key into which his voice fell.

"Oh, papa! she said I was never to leave you," Elinor said.

At this Mr. Percival's countenance changed once more. The shade upon it was almost angry for a moment. A great many thoughts passed through his mind before he spoke. That he should thus be put under the charge, so to speak, of his own child, brought a momentary irritation to his mind, and along with this came other thoughts. It was not that it occurred to him as yet that another wife might enter his house: but still such a possibility can never be altogether out of the question; and to have a girl sit over him as custodian and guide, had something ridiculous in it. A touch of indignation, a sense of ridicule went through his thoughts. He half laughed; then remembered that laughter was not suitable to his deplorable position. "My dear Nelly," he said, with that formality which is so usual a way of showing a little irritation, "I know your intentions are excellent, and we all know that your dear mother thought of nothing but our welfare: but here, I think, there is a mistake. Do I look like a man that requires to be taken care of? Am I the sort of person to put my burdens on the shoulders of another, and that my own child?"

As he stood there straight and tall, a man full of vigour and strength, there were few people who would not have sympathised with him in this appeal, and pronounced for him that he was not indeed that kind of man. But his daughter, timidly looking at him through her tears, having that intimate knowledge of him and of all his weaknesses which children acquire without knowing it, felt, even in the bounds of her heart at her sudden liberation, a tremor go through her. She could not refuse to take back her freedom, but yet she felt, in the doing so, that her mother was right, even though it might be wrong to ask so much from the devotion of any child. He was so strong; he held his head so high; he had so little the air of being crushed under his responsibilities. But Elinor's heart did not give any reply to his question. She stood trembling, wistful, looking up at him, saying nothing. Philip, however, was much more ready with his response.

"I said so," he cried. "I knew there must be some mistake. We can well understand it at such a moment, and pardon——"

"Pardon! there is no question of pardon. She was always thinking of what was best, poor dear. She was over-anxious, and so is Nelly. Come, there is enough of this. When I say you shall have the baby, I go as far as a man can be expected to go, because your dear mother wished it. But no more, no more, Nelly. You must neither ill-use Philip, nor make him think you have such a high opinion of yourself."

"It was never that," she said under her breath.



"I hope I can take care of myself," said the squire, "and Mrs. Elinor, you will come back, no doubt, from time to time, and give us the benefit of your mature opinion." He waved his hand to them as he went out of the room with a somewhat cloudy smile, which changed as he went away into the easier, good-natured, habitual indulgence which he had been so used to exercise. He was very good-natured, very kind, offence blew away from him in the fresh air he loved. Poor dear! she had always thought he wanted her management, though she was so weak and he

so strong. He said to himself that it was all her love, dear soul, yet mistaken, as women so often are.

And the young people left behind began to talk of their future, of their marriage, to which now there was no real obstacle. A few months more and all uncertainty would be over. But Elinor, while she consented and listened to all her lover's happy anticipations, and even felt in her own heart the joy of the liberation, was conscious of a tremor and shiver which she could not overcome.

(To be continued.)

## LEFT TO HIMSELF.

By the Rev. P. ANTON, Minister of Kilsyth. Author of "Masters in History."

"A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."—Prov. xxix. 15.

IN these busy times, when most people have far more to do than they can well accomplish, the force of the sacred proverb is apt to be lost sight of. While the man who can go his own way and follow his own inclinations is, for the most part, regarded with envy, few are there who consider what a dangerous thing it is for man or woman, for however brief a space, to be left to himself or herself.

When we look round about us we cannot but perceive how disaster overtakes the very earth and the plants that grow out of it when they are taken no account of. Here, in the first place, is a tree, we shall say, just approaching the fruit-bearing time. This year, if it is pruned and tended, it is sure to carry fruit. But suppose it is neglected; suppose the sweet moistures are never let in about its roots, and all the young wood is allowed to remain, then it will most certainly not bear at all. But more than that, if it is allowed to remain untouched till another season, it will then, probably, be a tree spoiled and ruined: and spoiled and ruined for this simple reason, and none other—that it hath been *left to itself*. Or, again, say a farmer was to take no account of one of his fields; say he never brought his ploughs into it to turn it over, nor sent his harrows through it to pulverize it; say he never took the stones off it, nor put the seed into it, what would be the certain result of this doing nothing husbandry? The result would most surely be that, when in the autumn time other fields were waving with golden crops, and reapers were weary in them binding the long sheaves, and the horses were sweating in them pulling the loaded wains to the farm, in the field the farmer had neglected there would be a scene of desolation; there every weed would have found shelter; there the dock would be showing its broad, green leaf; there the sorrel would be sprouting at its base; there the thistle would grow tall, and show

its prickly armour; and there, too, the poisonous hemlock would shoot up rank and strong; beneath the mole would burrow, and in the grass the weasel would chase his prey, and all would be waste; and simply on account of this plain and palpable reason—that the field had been left to itself.

Now, we will do very wrong if at the first we try to connect with the proverb any very deep or out-of-the-way meaning. Its primary signification is very plain and homely. We know well how, when a child is left to himself, he is very apt to bring his mother to shame in a great many ways. In one little hour what a number of dangers may a child fall into! By taking some adventurous step; by rashly putting forth his little hand to something he should not touch; by fire, or by water, he may receive some scar or malformation that may remain with him for life. There is a picture in popular circulation that brings home the danger that may flow from the slightest neglect. In the background of the picture is a little cottage, and not many yards from the door of the cottage is a great precipice rising sheer up from the sea. Within a yard of the verge stands a child arrested by the sight, and gazing in wonderment on the ocean lying far below. In the distance the mother is seen speeding with all haste to her babe. Now, when one looks on the child not three feet from the edge of the rock, one has brought home to him, in a very lively manner, what dangers may flow from leaving a child to himself.

Say, then, a child met in with some accident which maimed him for life, through maternal carelessness, we know well how, ever afterwards, the mother would not cease to upbraid herself. Every time she saw the child limping before her she would be ashamed she had left him that short half-hour to himself. But it is apparent that a child may be cared for physically and still left to



"The girls were all gathered on the broad steps . . . at the prolonged parting  
of the lovers."—*ELINOR*, page 132.

# Sunday Talk.

NEW SERIES.

AUGUST, 1884.

ELINOR.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

## CHAPTER III.



**T**HE summer went on with subdued but increasing cheerfulness. A house full of children cannot keep long the habits of grief. The burden may be still there; but on the surface, at least, there must be a lightening, a resumption of old ways, a renewing of smiles, and even laughter, for the sake of the children. They were all young together

at Armistead, which was the name of Mr. Percival's place; he, though he was approaching fifty, the youngest of all. The deliverance of the house from an invalid's needs and presence was, perhaps, though every one would have thought it terrible to confess this, in its way, a certain relief. There was no longer the consideration of what mamma would like, of what would be bad for mamma; to restrain them. This removal of a burden, though no one would have confessed it, was sold upon Mr. Percival in a double way. He was no longer conscious of being looked and waited for by some one who would not go to sleep, nor attempt to take the rest necessary to her comfort, till she had seen him, which had been a constant bond. He was now free to go and come as he pleased, and he took full use of the freedom. In other circumstances, Elinor, no doubt, would

have interposed and established claims upon him; but now she, too, was otherwise occupied. All the time she could spare from the children was spent with Philip. It was for Philip's step she listened: it was he for whom the welcome was ever ready. Her father, perhaps, missed the half painful, half pleasurable compulsion more than he felt relieved by its absence. He felt both together, the relief and the want; and by degrees he took his liberty more and more, and was more and more absent from home. Elinor did not observe it, being wrapped in her dream, and in that selfishness of two, which never feels like selfishness; and thus her father, for whom, indeed, it would have been ridiculous to suppose that she had any responsibility, slipped more and more out of her hands. Other people remarked it, though she did not. He went to the races, for which he had always had a great liking, and came back poorer than he went. Nothing, however, happened to alarm anybody till the end of the summer, when he was absent for some time. It was then eight months after Mrs. Percival's death, and the time of Elinor's marriage drew near. She had prepared almost everything, put the house in order, and engaged, after many researches, an elderly governess who was to take her place, and act as instructor and guide to the other girls, two of whom were nearly grown-up, girls of sixteen and seventeen. Elinor was greatly occupied by all these arrangements: her mind was full of them; and if her heart at the same time was full of Philip, who could blame her? She was not her father's keeper, and she was all the more devoted to the future partner of her life that there had been a moment when it seemed that she must be parted from him.

It was autumn when the event happened which made so much difference in all their lives. Mr. Percival had gone to Goodwood some time before, and he had not returned upon the day on which he was expected; neither had he written to say



that he was not to be looked for. The dog-cart was sent to the station for him, and all was prepared for his return, but he gave no explanation or warning of his non-arrival, and for a day or two everything stood on the footing of expectation, and he was looked for by every train. When a week passed without any news of him the household in general grew a little anxious, but only a little, for he had by this time become less regular in his habits, and he was not accustomed to write regularly, now that there was no wife who expected a letter every day. And then, Elinor

was greatly occupied with her own affairs, and the others were all so young. But as the days went on and nothing was heard of him, a feeling of danger and trouble stole into the house. What could have detained him? where could he have gone? As he had never been guilty of any such absence before, it was of physical danger they all thought. Could he be ill? But then, as Philip said, if he were ill they must certainly have heard; if he had met with an accident somebody would have written or telegraphed to convey the bad news to his family. This certainly it could not be. The young people could not tell what to do; to write here and there, to ask if any of his friends knew where he was, seemed an injury to Mr. Percival, who was not a man who did not know how to take care of himself. Elinor and Philip passed hours talking it over, without being able to come to any sort of conclusion. They thought of a great many reasons for his absence and silence, but none that were satisfactory. At last it was arranged that Philip should go to the

place where Mr. Percival was last known to have been, and find out whether he was still there, or if there was any news of him.

"You may make sure of a telegram to-morrow night," Philip said as he took his leave, doing everything he could to encourage Elinor, who began to be unhappy about her father. He had stayed to dinner as he so often did, and it was a great comfort to the trembling girls when he proposed to make this journey.

"If you find him all right you will not say anything, as if we were finding fault with him?" Elinor said.

"Finding fault! Of course I shall say nothing. I will tell him I have some business that I want to consult him about. And so I have. I want a horse for you, and nobody can advise me so well as he can. Of course I shall find him, and you shall have a telegram to-morrow night!"

These were the words with which he parted with her at the hall door. It was a soft summer evening, just



touched with the mist that belongs to autumn, with a sense of coming decay, or rather the fulness that precedes decay, in the air. The girls were all gathered on the broad steps, wistful, yet not too serious to refrain from a laugh at the prolonged parting of the lovers. "As if they were not to see each other for years," Mabel said, who was next to Elinor. They all stood looking after him as he disappeared into the twilight, for the days were still long and the light lingered though it was late. He was scarcely out of sight when there came a sound of wheels from the avenue which made



their hearts beat. Philip had taken the road through the shrubberies which led to his own house, and they all called after him with one accord when they heard the sound of the wheels—"Here must be papa at last," they said; "Philip! come back, Philip!" Before, however, it could be known whether he had heard or not, all their thoughts were suddenly changed by the arrival of the vehicle they had heard coming, which was an old-fashioned gig from the station. At the first glance they perceived that the traveller in it was not their father; at the next that it was a person known to them all from their childhood, old Mr. Bromley, the solicitor, who managed Mr. Percival's affairs.

"Something has happened to papa," Mabel said, clasping her hands. Elinor stood on the steps to receive him, growing suddenly pale with agitation and alarm. "Oh, one of you go and call back Philip!" she cried, scarcely knowing what it was she said. The old gentleman got down with precaution, taking so long about it that the girls were out of patience.

"What is it, Mr. Bromley? oh, what has happened to papa?" they said, gathering round him with white faces. Perhaps it was because he wanted to put off his communication as long as possible that he got down so slowly.

He waved his hand to them with a smile, and said—"Nothing, my dears, nothing! Your papa is quite well," with what was meant to be a very re-assuring air. But Elinor, at least, was not re-assured.

"Come into the library," she said, leading the way. The two middle ones, Lucy and Maurice, were just going to bed. They divided themselves into three parts in this family: the elder ones, who were all girls, the middle ones, who were a pair, and the little ones, who were three boys. The baby, who wound up all, was a little creature by herself, very sacred to them all as being a special legacy from their mother. The middle ones ought to have been in bed some time ago, but discipline was relaxed under Elinor's youthful rule. They stood, falling back upon each other, and gazed at Mr. Bromley with eyes full of wonder yet satisfaction, for to hear any one arrive was a pleasure. Elinor bade them run away upstairs as she passed—"Yes, of course you shall hear all about papa," she said. Her sisters trooped after her. They were all three in white frocks with black ribbons, almost as broad as their persons, and Mabel and Sophy clung together, while Elinor, taking up a candle from the hall table, went on very lightly, very quickly ahead. It was quite dark in the library, the windows showing against the twilight but affording scarcely any light. The three white figures made a little show like a dim illumination in the gloom, and Elinor's candle shed a curious light upon the anxious faces. She turned round upon

Mr. Bromley hastily, and said—"Now tell us all about papa. I am sure you have come about papa."

"He is quite well, quite well I assure you. There is nothing the matter with his health," said the old gentleman, putting on his spectacles and looking from one to another. Then he said: "Is there nobod yolder than you in the house? Have you got no aunt, or friend, or even governess?" He was overwhelmed by the sight of the three soft, young faces, all so like each other, looking at him with earnest eyes.

"I am old enough for anything," Elinor said, and then she looked at her young sisters with a perception that in their case there was some cause for Mr. Bromley's hesitation. "Mabel and Sophy," she said, with her soft, girlish voice, which was not without a certain authority, "would you please go into the drawing-room? Mr. Bromley would be more at his ease with only one of us. Don't say anything, please, but go."

"We are as anxious about papa as you are," said Sophy, always disposed to rebel, but Mabel was more generous. She took her sister by the arm. "It is quite true, there are too many of us," she said; "we'll go and send Philip." Mr. Bromley said nothing till the door closed behind them, and then he asked, "Who is Philip? Your brother?—Oh, now I remember. The eldest are all girls, more's the pity, and Mr. Philip is—— Perhaps I had better see him first?"

"I am the eldest," said Elinor. "What has happened? Tell me. There is no one to manage anything but me."

After a long pause and several efforts to avoid her questioning, Mr. Bromley at last spoke. "I fear it is very serious," he said; "your father, probably upset by the late events, and feeling the want of your mother's influence—for he was always a little given to this sort of thing—your father, my dear Miss Elinor—dear me, dear me, is there not some one a little older to speak to?—your father has been betting largely——"

"Betting! Oh, is that all?" she said, with sudden relief, clasping her hands together.

"ALL!" he said, with a consternation which capitals can vainly attempt to render, "what would you have worse?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Bromley," said Elinor; "I thought he might have broken his leg or—something; I thought he might have had a fit. I am so glad this is all."

"Oh," said the old gentleman, with impatience, "why isn't there some one older in the house, some one who can understand? It is much worse than a fit; that could only have hurt him personally. But this is destruction to you all, ruin to the family. Broken his leg! I wish he had broken every bone in his body."

"Mr. Bromley!"

"Oh, my dear young lady, you must excuse me.

You have no idea how serious this is. I wish I could see Mr. Philip, who, as I have heard, is on the point of becoming—, or some other responsible person. You, of course it is quite natural, think of your father first. Where is your uncle, Miss Elinor? and no doubt you have some relations on the mother's side?"

The meaning of the news which thus so suddenly burst upon her began by degrees to filter into the mind of Elinor as he spoke. A chill came over her, a sense of something more terrible to come. She did not understand the reality of the matter, nor take in even the words that were said to her, but she began to be aware dimly that some catastrophe had occurred; the promise to her mother flashed back upon her mind, and all that was involved in it. She grew very pale, as she stood, still with the candle in her hand, and her eyes growing larger and larger as she gazed fixedly upon the old lawyer's face.

"Mr. Bromley," she said, "I don't know what you mean about our uncle and our relations. I am old enough to manage the house and the children. My mother"—she paused, with a sob in her throat, before she pronounced this name—"left the charge to me. Don't hesitate because I am so young. Whatever is necessary for the children and for papa I am old enough to do it. Uncles are different. I would rather no one except ourselves knew."

"Oh, my dear young lady!" said old Mr. Bromley, again. He shook his white head, with the most mournful look. "You don't know what it is you are undertaking. Oh, yes, yes, I am very thankful that the poor dear children have such a brave sister to stand by them. But you will not be able to do without help, and a great

deal of help. All your friends will have to be appealed to, and you must think of yourself as well as of the others. You are not at liberty, Miss Elinor, to choose for yourself; you must think of the poor young gentleman."

Elinor listened with a heart confused with pain, with a bitter sense of sudden downfall and mortification not to be put into words. The poor young gentleman! that meant Philip, of whom hitherto she had felt herself the queen and mistress. Was it possible that now he was to be pitied as the companion of her troubles? And those people so little known, whom Mr. Bromley called "friends."

Her uncle Percival, who had but lately given up active duty with his regiment, and who had spent most of his life abroad; her mother's relations, who lived in a distant county, and had shown little interest in the children at Armistead? The idea of appealing to them chilled the very blood in her veins. To expose the family secrets, the father's faults to the judgment of strangers, this was the only thing that was insupportable. For her own part, Elinor was eager to pledge herself



to everything that could be required, to take them all upon her shoulders; but to think that the cold critics who already had found fault with him should now have him at their mercy, "Oh, no, no, no," she said to herself, "anything but that!"

To relieve the extreme tension of her mind even of the common necessities of life fortunately came in. She had to think of the old man who was her guest, and who, though so full of anxiety and excitement, yet remembered very well that he had eaten no dinner, and liked to be comfortable. Mabel and Sophy had not succeeded in calling back Philip, who had been already out of hear when the dog-cart appeared. He had to be wait-

that his proposed expedition was unnecessary, which Elinor did in the briefest note, asking him to come to her early next day. Then she prevailed upon the others to go to bed, saying as little to them as was possible, yet enough to send them both crying upstairs, with a sense of some vague but terrible calamity which had happened to papa. Then Elinor sat down by the old gentleman while he ate (not without enjoyment) his late dinner, and got from him by degrees all the details of the story. Mr. Percival had come to him suddenly two days before, and had given him instructions to sell all that could be sold, even the furniture in the house, the horses, all that was not included in the entail. The explanations he afforded to the astonished solicitor had been few. He had given no directions about his family. "Elinor will look after them," he had said; "her

mother left them to her. My wife was right in that, as she was in most things. It would have been better for me, Bromley, if I had died along with her." This he said with the facile emotion of a man whose repentance does not lead to any change of conduct, but exhales in a momentary despair, and then he had gone away without an indication where he was going. So deep an impression had he made by his temporary woe upon the old man that Mr. Bromley's eyes moistened, and he paused in the middle of his cutlet to give full effect to the tale. And Elinor wept tears of pity and tenderness over her father—"Oh, poor papa, poor papa!"—not thinking or perceiving what the burden was which he had left upon her shoulders, or how changed in a single hour the life which awaited her now.

(To be continued.)

## FAITH'S TRANSFIGURATION.

By the REV. E. G. CHARLESWORTH.

"Life is serious, a journey to another end. This journey becomes easier the more the number of those we love increases in heaven."

The still air moved not stem or leaf  
 Whilst shadow on a gravelet lay  
 Crossed by a golden sunset ray—  
 Image, I thought, of mingled grief  
 Of one knelt there with-blest insight  
 And light on her heart-shadows cast,—  
 Half sorrow's night to morning passed  
 Through Faith transfigured on its height;  
 God's answer to her closed eyes  
 This summer's night  
 As the day dies.

## JENNY GEDDES.

By PROFESSOR JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

ON one of the stout piers that support the Gothic arches in the Cathedral of St. Giles, Edinburgh, the visitor beholds with interest a memorial brass bearing the following inscription:—

TO  
**JAMES HANNAH, D.D.,**  
 DEAN OF THIS CATHEDRAL  
 1634-1639.

*He was the first and the last who read  
 the Service Book in this Church.*

THIS MEMORIAL IS ERECTED  
 IN HAPPIER TIMES BY HIS DESCENDANTS.

There is nothing in these words indicative directly of any emotion, sympathetic or otherwise, that the

spectator is expected to feel towards the personage whose ultimate act of ceremonial worship is commemorated; but the very fact of the memorial being there at all, coupled with the historic significance of the word "*last*," and the P.S. with regard to "*happier times*," seems calculated to call forth an act of pitiful regret for the vanished performance, and of reverential sympathy with the performer. To Scotsmen who are familiar with the history of the period, and the notable scene that was enacted in the church on the 23rd day of July, 1637, the respect paid to the memory of the Dean in such a place will appear the more extraordinary; for the Dean, as is well known, though a prominent actor in the scene, was an actor in the sense that King Edward II. was at the Battle of Bannockburn: he represents the defeated and not



## ELINOR.

By MRS OLIPHANT.

### CHAPTER IV.

THE period that followed was more painful and miserable than can be described. Philip, arriving early next morning with the expectation of hearing that Mr. Percival had fallen ill somewhere, that he had met with an accident, was altogether crushed by the discovery of what had really happened. He was not prepared for such a tremendous emergency, and it appeared that there was not sufficient force or courage in him to meet it, for he did little but regard Elinor with awed and imploring looks, and listen to what she suggested. For her part Elinor was profoundly disappointed and discouraged by his silence. It is doubtful what she expected him to say, but she certainly did expect some impulsive utterance, some rash offer which would have inspired her, and made her sacrifice one of enthusiasm and noble self-devotion. She said to herself, proudly, that she would never have permitted him to take that burden on his shoulders; that it was more than any man ought to do; that she would not have consented. Ah, but had he offered it! had he even said, "Your children are mine, and we will care for them together," how sweet it would have been to deny him in love and admiration, to make the sacrifice for his sake! The sentiment, perhaps, was a fantastic one, but when Philip went away crushed, silenced, saying nothing, too much overwhelmed by the new development of affairs to know what to think and less what to say, Elinor's heart sank in her bosom. She, for her part, had never any doubt as to what she must do. During the long night when she had not slept, but had spent all the lingering hours in thought, the necessities of the position had become very clear to her. She knew that she must now accept, without any faltering, the charge her mother had left upon her. Oh, no faltering now! no possibility of any deliverance, no escape, nor, she said to herself, desire of escape. She must turn her back upon life and all its individual joys. Henceforward she must belong, not to herself, not to Philip, but to the children. If anything was left at all to live upon, it must be hers to bring them up, to be their nurse and mother. And if there was nothing left, then she must work for them. All this seemed beyond discussion, the most certain of all duties to the girl's inexperienced and ardent mind. She perceived no difficulty in doing it, no trouble in thus re-arranging her life. But Philip! she wanted him to keep his high place, though she might have no share in it. She desired that he

should be generous, noble, eager to take his share, although she had resolved that she would bear her burden alone. She imagined all his entreaties, and the heart-broken delight with which she would recognise in him her highest ideal, even in withdrawing from him. But this was not to be. Philip did not say a word which could be interpreted into any heroic proposal—he was dumb, overwhelmed, looking at her anxiously, following all the consultations in which old Mr. Bromley engaged her, going after them from room to room, as they surveyed what there was in each that was valuable, that could be sold. His looks were pitiful, helpless, confused; he was altogether prostrated by the weight of the calamity. And Elinor's eyes, which at first had sought his, turned from him after a time with a proud disappointment that was almost contempt. He was sensible of this too vaguely, as if it was part of the bad dream in which he had suddenly lost himself and his hopes. Poor Philip, indeed, was perhaps the person most to be pitied in this incomprehensible catastrophe. He was not ungenerous nor wanting in affection. He loved Elinor truly, and for her, individually, would have shrunk from nothing. But in a moment to feel that the ground went from under his feet, to find himself involved in bankruptcy and public scandal, and to accept the burden of a forsaken family, a number of helpless children who would fill his house and occupy his wife's thoughts, and turn the joy and freedom of youthful life into premature care and responsibility—this was something for which Philip was not prepared. He left Armstead conscious that he had failed, conscious of Elinor's disappointment, and that he was not capable of doing what a man, who was her equal, should do, of standing by her whatever she might undertake; but though the sense of this failure depressed him profoundly, it did not supply the necessary stimulus. He walked home sadly thinking it all over, wondering what his mother would say, what everybody would think. The mere fact that Elinor was thus, in a moment, deprived of fortune and even family reputation, would make his mother talk, though he himself loved her only the better that she had now nothing in the world but himself. But the children—the family which was now destitute. There was no fire of impulse in Philip's heart to make him do an imprudent thing. The quick flash of inspiration which will sometimes simulate high generosity and self-sacrifice, and lead a man to do things that he regrets bitterly afterwards, had no



existence in him. Philip was not impulsive, and he was struck dumb by this great appeal to him, to which he found in his own nature no reply.

"You must send for your uncle, Miss Elinor. You must allow me to communicate with your mother's relations," the old lawyer said that night. These twenty-four hours had greatly worn and exhausted the young creature, who stood alone, the head of the helpless family. Her face had grown pale, her eyes hollow. Much that had still retained a light of hope in the morning had settled for her now into a greyness without illusion, without reflections. On some vital matters she had made up her mind. Last night, the thought of communicating with these far-off rela-

you were going to be unreasonable. Forgive me, I am speaking exactly as I think. Things will arrange themselves. Once make up your mind to it, and you will find that nothing is so bad as it appears at first."

"I suppose not," she said. She knew very well why he had expected to find her unreasonable. He, too, had looked for an impulsive outburst on the part of Philip, an eager offer to take all upon himself, and he was too clear-headed not to perceive the meaning of the young man's silence, and of Elinor's acquiescence. But she was too deeply cognizant of it all, and of what it meant, to take any notice of this. More, a thousand times than last night, her heart was crushed



"The sight of those young, helpless creatures was to him very touching."

tions had been revolting to her; now she accepted it with a composure which startled herself.

"Yes," she said, faintly. "I suppose so," closing her eyes a little under the shadow of her curved hand.

"It will be better in every way. You must not think they will make themselves disagreeable. On the whole, my dear young lady, there is far more kindness than unkindness in the world. I would advise you, if you will take my advice, to accept, wherever it offers, a comfortable home for the children. It would be happier for them, of course, to be brought up together, but what can you do? And it will not be so bad as you think."

"I have no doubt you are quite right, Mr. Bromley."

"I am truly glad to hear you say so. I feared

in her bosom; but along with the passive sense of a calamity too great for her, had arisen a strong, almost wild, determination. The element of uncertainty, at least, was all out of it. She knew what was before her—knew, and no longer paused or hesitated, or had any uncertainty before her as to what she ought to do.

The relations came. Her uncle Percival, and her mother's sister, Mrs. Crossford, and a cousin from the North, who was the head of Mrs. Percival's family, a wealthy person and childless. It was a curious assembly. They were all received in Armstead as if everything was still prosperous there, and they had been called together for some family ceremonial. As yet, indeed, the household was intact; and though there began to rise a consciousness among the servants of impending

change, it was as yet no more than a consciousness, and the new comers were themselves puzzled by the stately order and completeness of the house to which they came as conscious benefactors to help a ruined family. Mrs. Crossford disapproved, and thought that it was almost wicked at such a moment to have an excellent dinner served with all the beautiful plate, and crystal, and china which she had almost envied her sister; and even General Percival, though he prided himself on being a man of the world, was startled to find so little evidence of the tremendous change that had occurred. The young people viewed these arbitrators of their fate with a half-frightened eagerness, standing close together to get a little support from each other, and gazing wistful upon the strangers who had, in some extraordinary manner, become in a moment so all-important. The three girls, with Maurice and Lucy, who came next in order, were all that were visible the first evening. Maurice, though he was in one sense the least susceptible (being only a boy) to what was going on, was by this time roused a little to the consciousness that he was the eldest son, and therefore a person of more consequence than the others, who were nothing but girls—and looked about him upon the unexplained arrival of all these uncles and aunts, who clearly did not come without reason, and the absence of his father, equally unexplained, with startled eyes, "Gone abroad? Oh, that's just a story to keep us quiet; there is something more in it," he said to Lucy, his constant companion. "But Elinor would not tell us a story," the little girl cried, who was more believing than he. "Elinor will have to tell us something more," Maurice said, looking fiercely at the intruders with eyes which, though defiant, had a strange inclination to tears. These intruders inspected the children with curious glances, shaking their heads and making little observations to each other under their breath. Maurice, who was small for his age, had not yet outgrown the velvet suit and lace collar in which his mother had loved to see her boy. They were all very prettily dressed for the evening, for Mr. Percival, too, had always taken an interest in their good looks. The three tall girls, in their white dresses, keeping close together; the two smaller figures in the corner, all so doubtful with an instinctive anxiety, gazing with keen, youthful inspection at the new comers, made a pitiful sight; and the uncles and aunts were like polite and Christian purchasers at a new kind of slave-market, observing with all the interest of possible acquisition the different specimens placed before them, yet with a certain consideration for their feelings, and none of that coarse examination into age and breeding which belong to more primitive sales of flesh and blood. "The boy must of course be looked after," they said to each other. "The entail protects him." "And I think if we must have one of them, that pretty Sophy, the third

girl, is the one I should like best." "I will take Lucy," Mrs. Crossford said; "she is a nice little thing, and her habits are not so formed as the others. She is named after one of our family who died young. My poor sister always took her own way with the children, and the elder girls I should be afraid of: but I will take Lucy."

The elderly cousin, Mr. Fitzmaurice, was the only one who did not make a distinct choice. He had no wife, nor any belongings to occupy his first thoughts; and the sight of this house, still bearing its accustomed aspect of prosperity, though on the verge of destruction, and of all those young, helpless creatures, smiling pathetically, with eyes strained by alarm and wonder in the face of fate, was to him very touching and affecting. The tears were sometimes as near his eyes as they were to those of Maurice and Lucy; but while the children kept them back in pride and bewilderment, the man's were too deep to shed. They stood in his eyes like two lakes of profound and silent pity, through which he saw everything around him magnified and softened. He was the one who said the least, but nothing escaped him of all this wonderful and moving sight.

Next morning the three little boys suddenly appearing at the breakfast table moved the aunts and uncles who had forgotten their existence to a kind of horror, which burst into a low moan all round when nurse sailed into the room—Nurse, who believed in baby, and felt that no convulsion, however terrible, could bring any harm to that small potentate—with the smiling infant in her arms. Elinor took the child from her, inspired by the voice of horror which had sounded from the spectators, and turned round upon them with a new light in her eyes. "This is my baby," the girl said. "My mother left her to me. She is my little child." But this was the only moment in which there was any stand made against those who now had all the power in their hands. General Percival requested that the children might be sent away after a few minutes, and suggested that the relations should lose no more time in saying what they thought and what they meant to do. "You will come, too, Elinor," he said, as they all left the breakfast table and went into the library, accompanied by Mr. Bromley. Elinor came last of all. She buried her face for a moment in little Margaret's muslin and lace before she gave her over again to nurse; and she kissed the three little boys, who were too young for explanations, and who were clamouring for her attention. The elder people had all gone before her, and she followed alone.

General Percival had been made, by general consent, the spokesman. He asked Mr. Bromley to tell them frankly what there was to rely upon for the children, and shook his head, as everybody did, when he heard how complete was the ruin which had overtaken his brother. "Tom must

have been mad," he said, and they all echoed the sentiment. There was, in reality, nothing for the children. The entailed estate was small, and only a small allowance could be expected for the education of the heir. For the younger children there was nothing. This statement, though they all knew it before, was received by the party with an outburst of horror and indignation. And then they began to partition the family out. The General and his wife had consulted together, and had taken a very liberal resolution. They had decided that to separate the two girls who had always been together—Mabel and Sophy—would be cruel, and that to those two they would undertake to give a home. Mrs. Crossford, who had pitched upon Lucy, would not object, she said, to receive Maurice for his holidays, and it was full time he was at school. There was thus a little emulation in liberality between these two. Mr. Bromley, who was in something of the position of the auctioneer, turned round upon them both and showered forth compliments. "My dear General; my dear lady!" he said, turning from one to another; and he was so much moved by the nature of the operations as to take upon himself to promise them blessings in return for their generosity. Elinor stood all the time to listen, and heard everything without a word. They did not in their first fervour of charity and benevolence take any notice of her. Only Mr. Fitzmaurice, who had as yet made no offer, kept his eye upon her, and gave her the chair upon which she leant, supporting herself by it, though she did not sit down. When the first outburst was over there was a pause, and Mr. Bromley spoke. "There are still the little ones to be provided for," he said. A little cold chill breathed

about the room. He went on as if he were marking a catalogue. "Three little boys—and the baby—still quite a family. Lovely children, who would be the delight of many a home, to be—" he had almost said—disposed of, but changed his mind, and added, "settled for," with a sudden sense that Elinor's eyes, charged with proud tears, through which a fire of misery was gleaming, were fixed upon him. There was a thrill in the little assembly as she spoke.

"No one need be troubled about the children.

I will never leave the children. I am glad the others will be cared for; they are older; they would miss what they have been used to; but the little ones will not mind, so long as they have me."

"My dear Elinor," said her aunt, "you must not, indeed, make any such engagement; though, of course, it would be a relief to us all, and a great weight off our minds. But are you sure you have Mr. Hammond's authority for what you say?"

"Mrs. Crossford is quite right, Elinor. You must have Mr. Hammond's consent," said the General, shaking his head.

"Uncle, the children are my duty; they are not Mr. Hammond's."

"Good heavens, Elinor! you don't

mean that there is any drawing back; you don't mean that young Hammond—eh? I must see him; I must see him directly," said General Percival, rising hurriedly to his feet.

Elinor stepped forward into the middle of the room and stopped the rising indignation. "There is nothing to see him about. Mr. Hammond is not one ever to draw back. But I will never leave the children," she said.

(To be continued.)



"Mr. Hammond is not one ever to draw back," she said.



# Sunday Talk.

NEW SERIES.

OCTOBER, 1884.

## Elinor.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

### CHAPTER V.

PHILIP appeared that afternoon not less affected than he had feared to be, by the opinions of his mother and of all his faction, in respect to the new and astonishing change in the affairs of Armstead, which now began to be vaguely known about the country. Mrs. Hammond had been much upset by the news. She had cried at first over poor Elinor, but before the evening was over had begun to perceive that the match was not at all so good a one as her son had a right to expect.

"I have not a word to say against Elinor. She is a good girl, and she was an excellent daughter; indeed, my dear, she is perhaps too good a daughter and sister to be equally good as a wife. I doubt you will always find her heart in her own family; and you know I never thought her quite up to the mark for my son. A Hammond might marry anybody," Mrs. Hammond said. An opinion like this, often repeated, tells after a time, and it was repeated in meaning if not in words by the rector of Philip's parish, who was also his uncle, and by his aunt, the rector's wife.

"Now, I suppose you will have the house overrun by the little Percivals," that lady said. "I am as sorry for them as I can be, but it is rather dreadful to think of a bride coming home with a ready-made family."

"And her heart so bound up in them," repeated Philip's mother. "I am very fond of Elinor, poor dear, but I do wish Philip, when he marries, could have his wife to himself."

He got up and left the room not to hear more of this, but it told upon him notwithstanding; and when he went to Armstead next day his brow was cloudy, and his heart full of dejection and perplexity.

"I always understood that Elinor was to have no charge of the baby," he said to General Percival.

"My dear fellow, she is a girl of great force of character. She says she will not part with any of the little children; and of course it would be a relief to us all to know that they were so well disposed of."

"I always understood she was to keep the baby," said Philip, doggedly. He did not say anything against the children, but he allowed it to be seen that this was all he expected. This troubled the aunts and uncles, who had only been too glad to think that the trouble of the little ones was off their shoulders. They all thought it quite a pretty sight to see Elinor with the three little boys clinging to her, their little heads, blonde and brown, of different altitudes, from little Tom, who was only two, to Gerald, who was five. Mrs. Percival, the General's wife, was the first to express the doubts that had seized upon them all.

"I don't believe Mr. Hammond intends to let her have them: and what can we do with them?" she said.

"Oh," said Mrs. Crossford, "we may leave it with confidence to Elinor. No doubt she knows what she means to do. Probably there is some one in the village who will take care of them, and she could always keep her eye on them; or she will know how to talk over Mr. Hammond."

"But she must not be allowed to risk her own happiness for the children," said Mrs. Percival.

"Oh, she will know how to manage that," the other said.

As for Elinor, she said nothing at all on the subject. She was very busy, always employed, helping Mr. Bromley to arrange how the furniture were to be sold, and settling with the young ladies' maid how the things were to be packed for the girls who were going away. She said not a word about herself, or if there was any feeling involved in the partings that were imminent, or in the disruption of all old ties that was approaching: her complexion was the only



thing that told. Sometimes she would be very pale, but usually had a feverish colour, her cheeks burning under her hot eyes; but, of course, running up and down as she did all day long, always busy, was enough to explain her increase of colour, everybody said. It was not until the day before the departure of the relatives that anything definite was said. On that day Philip came over to dinner with the express intention of coming to a settlement. When the gentlemen came into the drawing-room after dinner he and the General drew Elinor aside.

The assembly of the ladies was a sufficiently agitated one. Mabel and Sophy showed signs of weeping, which indeed was half due to the excitement and agitation of the moment, and did not mean unmitigated woe. They were going out into the world, and they were going together, and probably would have been much disappointed had things settled into their usual order, and they had been told they were to remain at home after all; but still they paid their tribute to the place and the associations they were leaving, and cried, while the aunts consoled them, and whispered promises of visits to Elinor when all was settled. Lucy had been carried off to bed in a heart-broken condition,

and the air was full of excitement and feeling. Elinor had not cried at all. Her colour was very high, her eyes were blazing over the crimson in her cheeks, her hands clasped and unclasped each other with feverish restlessness. When the gentlemen drew her aside she gave them a faint smile, and went with them without hesitation into the inner drawing-room. It was her uncle who put her into a chair, with a consideration for her which Philip was himself too excited to show.

"My dear," he said, "we have neglected your

affairs too long. We must have you settled, too, before we go."

"I thought," said Elinor, "that it was settled. I am to stay till everything is over, and after—"

"After is just what I want to decide about. Mr. Hammond tells me that nothing has been definitely fixed about your wedding. It was to be in October: but we all think that in the circumstances a month earlier—"

"Uncle, this is not a moment to think of weddings. Philip has not said anything to me about it: that shows that he shares my feeling."

"No," said Philip, warmly; "I should like it to be to-morrow if I could. I have never given her any reason, sir, to doubt that."

"Nobody doubts it; you must not misunderstand each other," said the General, anxiously. "But of course it is not just such plain sailing as it would have been in happier circumstances. My dear Elinor, we must not let feeling carry the day. A month earlier, say the 3rd or 4th of September, when you will have had a week or two of repose after all your fatigues here—"

"My house will be all ready before then," Philip said. "and she knows how she has been looked for there for many a day."

He did not speak directly to herself, nor even look at her, but addressed



"I always understood that Elinor was to have the charge of the baby."

himself with great agitation to the General, who sat close by her, holding her hand.

"Well, my dear," said General Percival, soothingly, "that will be all right, don't you see. You will come to us as soon as you feel you can leave this house, and the marriage must take place from my house, which is the next best to Armstead. Of course we all deplore the necessity of leaving Armstead, there can't be any question about that: but my house is the next best."

"And about the children?" Elinor said.

How simple a question, how necessary, how inevitable! The General looked with some confusion at Philip, and Philip averted his face. Elinor, alone, gaining composure from the emergency, sat confronting them both, with her eyes steadily regarding them. They wanted to shuffle out of any decision, to leave it to circumstances, each hoping, perhaps, to circumvent the other. But Elinor was not to be put off. She would not leave the fate of the little ones to chance. "And about the children?" she said.

"My dear," said the General, "your aunt and I have done all we consider it just to our own family to do. We are taking Mabel and Sophy.

himself, yet obstinate. Elinor's voice did not change, so far as he could make out; nor did any alteration appear in her aspect, so far as the General could see.

"I told you, uncle," she said; "I have told everybody—I cannot leave the children. They are my first duty, you know. Baby is my own darling; mamma gave her to me. But nobody wants the little boys—nobody except those they belong to—and that is only me. Poor papa!"—here her voice broke a little, and she had to pause.

"Yes, to be sure," said the General; "as soon as your father gives us news of himself—and he must do so sooner or later—the little boys can be sent to him; so that will be settled easily enough."



Elinor settling how the things were to be packed.

And your Aunt Crossford is very kind. She will have almost as much trouble with Maurice's holidays, and looking after him generally, as if he was always in her house."

"And it has always been understood that the baby was to come with Elinor," Philip said.

His voice was husky, and he turned slightly away from her as he spoke. Oh, how bitterly he was ashamed of himself; how clearly he saw what was expected of him; what love would do if it was strong enough! But, on the other side, he saw his house turned permanently into a nursery, his wife absorbed in something else than himself—the look in his mother's eyes, the comments of the rector and the rectress. He turned his back upon her and spoke over his shoulder, despising

"If they are sent to him, I must be sent to him also. Ah, that is what mamma said. She said I was never to leave him. I have never had the time to leave him, so it is not my fault; but if he sends, and if he can have us, I must go, too."

"Elinor, you are acting like a fool—a generous fool, no doubt, but yet against all your true interests. Besides, you are bound; you are not your own mistress; your first duty is to Hammond."

She looked up at her lover, who turned half round at the mention of his name, and saw her look at him, though he did not look at her in return. There was a half smile upon her face, of suffering and patience in which was the very concentration of pain.

"Uncle," she said, "when two duties clash,

what is one to do? Philip will not have me in my way, and I cannot go to him in his. He has other people to care for him, and the children have only me."

This, in substance, was all that was said. There was, in fact, a great deal more, but neither of the three changed their position. The General, indeed, made one or two suggestions: that the children should be sent to school—which at their age was manifestly impossible; that they should be "put out to nurse"—he did not know what he meant by this, neither did any one else—to which proposal Elinor shook her head so'tly. And Philip repeated it was always understood that the baby—— He went home afterwards, feeling himself the veriest cur that ever trod the earth; which was not the case. He was only a man of ordinary feelings, without any strength of impulse or idea of self-devotion. There was no reason why his domestic comfort should be destroyed and all his relations offended in this way. Why should he do it? It was extravagant, ridiculous of Elinor. But, all the same, he despised himself as heartily as ever man did, and went home with his heart full, knowing very well that all was over and that nothing more was to be said. He was too honest to take up the burden and afterwards attempt to cast it off, as others might have done; and he had not the courage to accept it wholly. Why should he accept it? It was too much to ask of any man. In all this reasoning there was a great deal of justice: he had right on his side: but yet it is impossible to tell what a miserable coward he felt himself as he went home, leaving behind him all that had been most beautiful in his life.

All this time Mr. Fitzmaurice, from whom so much had been expected, had made no offer. The ladies thought he might very well have stepped in and taken the three little boys. A good nurse, that was all they wanted; and in his great house he would never have been annoyed by them. "He might have put them in the west wing which has never been inhabited since I can remember," Mrs. Crossford said; but even she did not care to suggest this in as many words. He did, however, make an offer of help that evening directly to Elinor herself. It was apparent enough when the group in the inner drawing-room broke up that the consultation had not ended satisfactorily, and when Philip departed gloomy, attended by General Percival to the door, Mr. Fitzmaurice came forward. He spoke very low, so that nobody else could hear.

"I don't ask what has been settled," he said, "I believe you are very capable of managing your own affairs. All I have to say is this, that there is a house close to mine vacant and of no use to any one, where there would be plenty of room for the children."

"Oh, thank you, cousin Maurice," said Elinor,

moved, for the first time, to tears. "But," she said, after a pause to recover her voice, "we shall have nothing to live upon. I must take them somewhere where I can get work, to keep us till papa sends for us——"

"That is quite impossible," he said; "I know your spirit: but it could not be permitted. There shall be enough for you to live upon. Don't say anything. Ellen Fitzmaurice's daughter shall not work for her living while I am to the fore—nor would the others allow it; on that point there is not a word to say."

And though this was not at all conformable to Elinor's passionate determination to be herself the sole protector of the children, it was so settled at the conference held by the two gentlemen at a later period of the night. General Percival had not much money to spare and he had postponed, as long as possible, the decision of this question, and his wife was very anxious to know how it was concluded. She went away next day with so serene a countenance that it was evident she had no sense of being wronged.

And thus ended so rapidly, so strangely, the earlier chapter of Elinor Percival's life. All that had been planned for her ended like a dissolving picture in a panorama—broke up and melted away, and changed into something new. Whether it was that some strange, prophetic potency was in her mother's dying appeal to her, a fate which, not being accomplished in one way, had to be realised in another, who can tell. Her heart had risen against the charge when she had felt herself bound to it by that pledge, but now there was no longer in her mind any opposition. There was no further scene between Philip and herself. He came haunting the house day by day, watching all the preparations for the final breaking-up with jealous and gloomy eyes; but no more was said about the removal, nor did he oppose her departure in any way. Every day made it seem more impossible that he should take her burden on his shoulders. It might have been, had he done it at first with the generous impulse which was not in his nature, but the longer it was delayed and the more it was thought of the more impossible did it become. He went to the station to see her off when she finally went away. The very commotion there was about the little party, the difficulty in keeping all the little boys together and getting them lifted one by one into the carriage, the troublesome liveliness of little Gerald, and Tommy's fright and bashfulness, and Eddy's propensity to lean against the door and fall out—made what was really a tragedy into comedy. To think of never moving anywhere without the bustle and confusion of this small mob, crowned by the appearance of the baby smiling in the arms of Mrs. Simmonds! Philip turned away gloomy, indeed, yet with a sort of thanksgiving, though all the time he despised himself to the bottom of



his heart. Even his mother, who had done so much to bring this about, and who was so thankful that he had "escaped" as she said, despised him a little, secretly. And yet he had not done anything wrong. He had not broken with Elinor, or "behaved badly," according to the usual phrase. They might still be married for anything that any one knew. If she ever came to herself, or if the little boys were sent for by their father, or if—but it was needless to enter into more peradventures. In any of these cases it was quite "on the cards," quite possible, even likely, that everything should come round again, and the marriage take place as before settled. This was what Mrs. Hammond said, in an anxious desire to prove to the neighbourhood that Philip had not behaved badly—that it was no vulgar abandonment on his part of a girl who had lost her fortune. On the outside, it is needless to say it had a disagreeable likeness to this not uncommon form of treachery.

Elinor went away with her children to the North. The house which Mr. Fitzmaurice placed

at her disposal was pretty and comfortable, newly furnished and decorated, "fortunately," he said, not explaining that it had cost him some thought and a good deal of money to get it so rejuvenated and beautified for her arrival. He was absent when that arrival took place, and the instalment was accomplished according to her own pleasure, without disturbance or interference. When all the excitement was over, and the calm of common day fell on the young creature thus separated from everything she had ever known, and suddenly changed into the sole head and guardian of a family of little children, it may be supposed that to hold up her courage and meet the course of life calmly was no small effort. But there was no one to see what it cost her. Her tears, if she shed any, her struggles in secret to maintain the calm front which she showed to the world, were beheld by no eyes save those which watch the heroes and martyrs of human existence from the serenest heights above.

And yet the measure of Elinor's cup was not full.

(To be continued.)

## Of Survival.

BEING THE LAST CHAPTER OF "OUR LITTLE LIFE." \* (Second Series.)

By A. K. H. B.

It is a strange fact. Survival: whether of men or things: that one should be going on at one's work in the old way when many who started at the same time have disappeared from these regions and work no more. To see others out is a grave thing.

One thinks of this, this bright August morning: being allowed to bring to its close a volume which comes after several others; while the work of many faithful workers whom we knew has been cut short: in any case, is no longer here. And one thinks, too, with wonder, how the first volumes find their yearly tale of readers still, surviving better ones. One wonders why. For we are not so foolish as to fancy that the best books live on, any more than the best men.

It may not be so with every reader of this page. But of us, who were students together, a good many remain: the majority is still on this side. What have we all come to?

Not to much. Our lot forbade that. We are all able to fancy that we have been circumscribed by circumstances. Doubtless our modest faculties circumscribed us too; and we do not fancy anything other. But when the choice was made of such a vocation as the writer's, it was well understood that it was to work which never could cease while the worker should be able in any way to hold on: to work which could never materially

change. There is no room here for what is called Ambition. The utmost length of the tether is very short. And we are well content that it should be so. And thankful that after all these years the work is congenial work: work which never will be liked unless by exceptional mortals: but to those whom it suits the best work of all.

What is it that impresses one, looking round, looking back?

They are doing their work decently: though coming to look worn and old and sometimes to feel weary: those that remain. But many have gone. There must needs be the inevitable percentage of those who proved Black Sheep, and went to the bad: not by any means those who seemed likeliest. And, God be thanked, the percentage was very small. But I remember well how I said to a careworn mother that in very many large families there is the one who goes astray. I am quite sure she had never even heard of Mr Buckle's "History of Civilisation:" but her answer (she was a Scotchwoman) was, *Yes, that is bound to be.* Then there were those early taken from human trouble: some with very hopeful makings. There is no more vivid recollection in some minds than of being told that such a one had come back from College very distinguished, but dying of consumption. Then the walk of several miles through country lanes to the farmhouse. He was not much changed, to our boyish

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# Sunday Talk.

NEW SERIES.

NOVEMBER, 1884.

## Elinor.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

### CHAPTER VI.

It was not till about a year after the settlement of Elinor and the children to their new life that anything was heard of Mr. Percival. There could be no doubt that his daughter was anxious to hear of him, and thought of him often, with thoughts of affection, not blame, such as moved the others. The sins of a father do not touch a child as do those of other relations as near to us. They are more easily accepted; they do not ask for forgiveness; there is a natural prepossession in his favour, that what he has done must be well done, intended for good, whatever mistake may happen to it by the way. Elinor had never blamed her father as the others did. She had been able to believe that something must have happened; that there had been some mistake; that he had been deceived; and for the first month or two she had been very anxious, looking for letters by every post. But by the time these letters arrived it had begun to be a relief to her that letters did not come. She had suffered a great deal, and she shrank instinctively from suffering more; for there was a painful certainty in her mind that further suffering must be involved when the curtains should open and the well-known figure reappear. Either it would be illness and death, or it would mean a new revolution in life. Sometimes, indeed, in the extreme quiet of the life which was bounded by the necessities of the children, and to which no new development seemed possible, there would rise in her mind a desire for change of any kind; but ordinarily it was with a little gasp of eagerness, followed by relief, that she looked at her letters, disappointed, yet comforted, to see nothing from him. When his letter came at last, it was with all the force of the unexpected, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky.

She was sitting, on a summer afternoon, in the little drawing room of her little house. It

stood in the midst of a garden, and was sweet and bright with flowers. The little boys were all out, and Baby, now a year old, was tottering about the grass plot, making ineffectual assaults upon the daisies, and coming back now and then to repose herself upon the spreading garments of the nurse, who sat upon a rug in the middle of the grass, well preserved from the damp, and affording a large mass of softness and warmth in her comfortable person for the repose of her nursing. The windows were open, the birds were singing, and the baby's little voice mingled fitfully with the other sounds. Elinor sat in her parlour, with everything still and sweet around her. Had she been a young wife awaiting her husband in the pretty sweet-smelling, sweet-sounding house, she might have presented a perfect picture of uneventful happiness. A little paradise: that was what the strangers who came to call named the house. She thought herself very wicked that the hours seemed so long to her, that the moments passed with such monotony. There were so many things, she said to herself, to make her happy. The children were all well, those who were separated from her as well as those who were with her, and everything going on well. The people about were kind, and came to see her; and there was enough to keep the little ones comfortable. Once she thought she would have to work for them; to live, perhaps, in a few dingy rooms in some town where she could get employment. But nothing of that kind had been necessary. She sat over her needlework, making, as was her constant occupation, the little pinafores and frocks that were always necessary, and was very angry with herself because the tears would gather in her eyes from time to time. Why? When the children were with her, as they would be presently, there was no time for folly like this. She had to tell them stories, to sing to them, to do everything that a young mother has to do; and the time

passed very quickly. But, sitting thus alone, it occurred to her to remember all that had happened at this time last year. All had then been well. The time of her marriage was hastening on, and Philip was rarely absent from her for a day. How cheerful it had been at Armstead, and how happy she had expected to be; and now all had come to this stillness which nothing disturbed but the clamour of the children, the visit of the village ladies, who were strangers, or of the clergyman. Where was Philip? It was months now since she had heard from him. Her eyes filled against her will. She could not see her needle, and had to pause to clear that moisture away before she went on. She was not quite twenty, and she had

the change which she had been, in spite of herself, longing for had come.

It was a very startling letter. In it he told her that, after his "misfortunes" (it was not to be expected that he should give them a harsher name), he had at last settled in a distant place in America (America was all that Elinor made out; where in America did not matter). He had no doubt everything had gone on quite well between her and Philip and Mr. Bromley, who was devoted to them all. "I have often regretted that circumstances compelled me to leave so much on your shoulders, my dear Elinor; but I have always comforted myself with the thought that Philip would share your burden, and that it was your



"It's a letter for you, Elinor," he cried.

no one to cling to, no one to support her, only the little children, who were her charge, and the occupation of her life.

At this moment the garden door burst open and the little boys appeared, tumbling over each other in their eagerness. She saw them from the window, and it was a pretty sight. She dried her eyes immediately, and called out to them with a cheerful voice in answer to their cry for "Elinor." "What is it? Who wants me?" she said. Then little Gerald, who was the biggest, emerged breathless from the group of little legs and arms—"It's a letter for you, Elinor," he cried. She took it through the window, smiling, and then the blood suddenly ebbed back upon her heart, for it was her father's handwriting; and

mother's desire to make you a sort of head of the family," he said. He was very sorry for himself, for he had gone through many trials, but he did not pity her. He added, however, at the end—"If you and Philip find the whole family too much for you, you must think what division would be the best, and let me know. I should be very glad to have either Mabel or Sophy, for a man wants some one to look after his comforts, especially here, where servants are bad and few; and she might bring one or two of the little ones."

In this easy manner did he settle the question. It would be hard to describe the agitation that arose in Elinor's mind. It could not be Mabel or Sophy who would go to him and take care of his comforts. Uncle Percival would not allow it, for



one thing. He and his wife had been very kind to the girls. They had done everything for them, had introduced them even, somewhat prematurely, into society, with the intention of marrying them off with as little delay as possible, Mr. Bromley said, though he was not infallible. But it was certain that Uncle Percival would not consent to send one of them to the wilds of America, and it was equally clear, Elinor feared, that neither of them would wish to go. To leave all their pleasures and prospects, and devote themselves to take care of their father, who had taken so little care of them, in order to make up to him for the want of servants, was that at all likely? Elinor said to herself that she would not permit it, if she alone were to be consulted.

But in her own case there was no reason which should restrain her. She had no one to consider, she said to herself, with a tear in the corner of her eye—nobody, but the children, who probably would be just as well in America as anywhere else. She had nobody even with whom to talk the matter over, but it occupied her all the more during the evening, when the children went to bed, and when nothing disturbed the perfect stillness that fell over the house. She shrank a little from the long voyage, and she shrank from the charge which it would be necessary for her to take upon her, the conflicting duties, the unknown life among strangers. Her heart sank, and yet it rose, feeling the encounter with difficulties to be at least more exciting than this dead calm. Already it had quickened a little the sluggish pulsation in her veins. But, on the other hand, it would be a complete and total separation from the life which she had renounced, indeed, but which still seemed within her reach.

She had given up Philip. Ah, entirely! she said to herself, with a disappointment in him which was deeper even than the disappointment for herself, and in which there was unexpressed, inexpressible, a subtle suggestion of contempt. But love is very hard to kill; and in some corner of Elinor's heart there remained the consciousness that Philip might yet repent, that he might see wherein he had failed. But if she voluntarily removed herself out of his reach, this possibility—if it was a possibility—would be over for ever. She did not discuss this with herself, but in the depths of her heart was conscious of it as an argument not altogether to be ignored. On the other hand, she confessed to herself, with a sigh, that in going to her father, in taking upon her young shoulders the charge of his comfort and perhaps his life, she would be carrying out her mother's will. It was what Mrs. Percival intended; it was what she had promised to do. Her father himself had released her from that promise; but now he wanted her. Elinor scarcely slept all night for thinking. And in the morning she could not refuse to see that the current of her reasoning ran all in one way. She acknowledged it with a pang and

heavy sense of utter renunciation, of a sacrifice still more tremendous than any she had already made, the sacrifice of possibility, the end of hope.

She was busy with these thoughts when she was surprised by the appearance of Cousin Maurice, which was the name by which Mr. Fitzmaurice was known in the house. His behaviour had been somewhat strange since the time when he had received and established the little family in the home which he had offered to them. It happens often enough in this world that a person capable of all manner of sacrifices in his or her own person will receive and witness the sacrifices of another without the slightest consciousness of them. Elinor was vaguely sensible that there was an interest and insight in the eyes of Cousin Maurice with which nobody else in the world regarded her. She felt tacitly, without quite knowing that she felt it, that no one understood her as he did; that no one divined what she required, or forestalled her wishes as this man, who said so little, who made no professions, was always doing. He had but rarely been resident in his own house since her arrival, a fact which had been much lamented by the neighbours, and concerning which she had asked herself vaguely, Why was it? What was the meaning of it? But whenever circumstances occurred in which she had need of support, by some curious concatenation he was always there. She had felt during the whole night so much desire to tell him, to ask him what she should do, that she got up with an internal conviction that something would arise to bring him. She said to herself, with a smile, that she had never wished for him in vain; and accordingly it was with little surprise, but an almost alarmed consciousness of power, that she saw him coming across the park, in the morning sunshine, towards the little house. The season was not over, and she had believed him to be in London: but she was scarcely surprised, because she wanted him, to find him here. She laughed, with the faintest suggestion of a blush, as she received him.

"I thought you were away," she said; "and yet I felt sure you would turn up somehow, for I wanted you so much."

"Did you want me?" he said, with a momentary gleam of eagerness. He had not his usual equable aspect: an air of pre-occupation and pain was in his face. "Have you heard already from Cheltenham?" Now, Cheltenham was the place where General Percival lived. Elinor took fright in a moment.

"I have not heard," she said, "but something has happened there. I can read it in your face. Oh, tell me, tell me! Some one is ill, something has happened; oh, tell me at once the worst there is to tell!"

"Something has happened," he said, "something very strange. I cannot conceal it from you: but not perhaps what you think. No one is ill."

"Thank God for that. It cannot be very terrible then," she said.

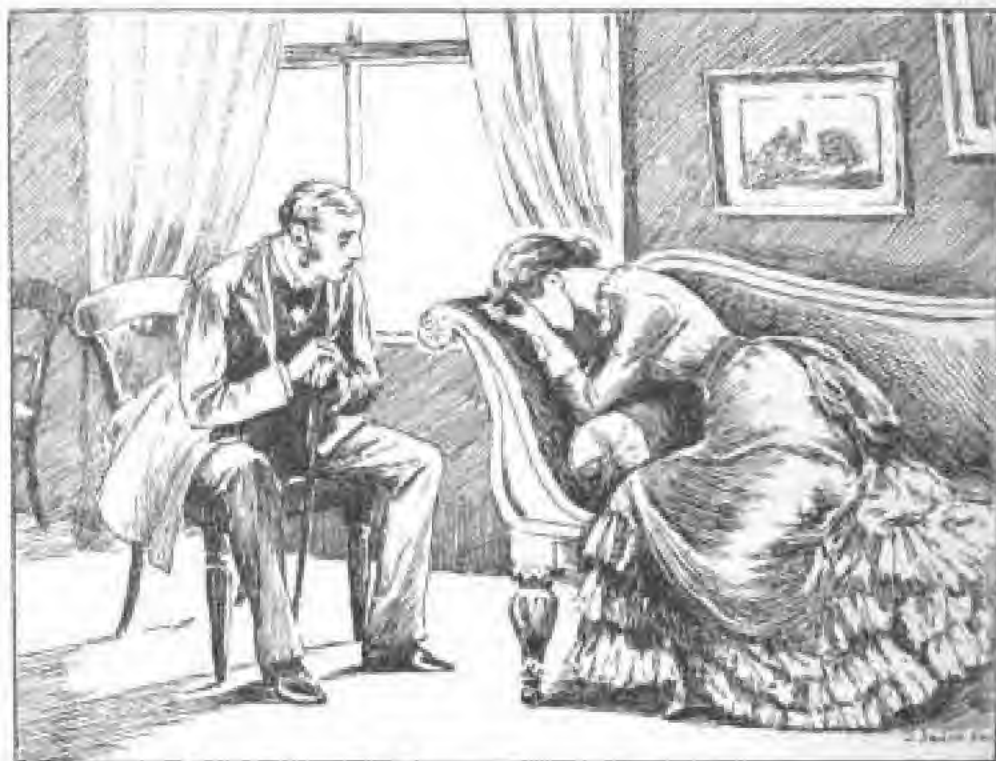
He looked at her for a moment with eyes which betrayed their secret: eyes full of admiration, and sympathy, and pity. They dazzled her a little, so that, half-conscious of something which she knew, yet was not acquainted with—if such contradictions can be put into words—she turned her own away. He was not old, as she had edily in the arrogance of youth taken it for granted he was till a very recent period. Elinor had become shaken in this belief of late, partly, perhaps, because it was usual here in the neighbourhood of his home to call him the young master, or the young squire. That name was no doubt a misnomer; he was not, like Philip, in the twenties,

and then suddenly, she could not tell how, like a divination it occurred to her to suspect something—not all the bitterness of the case, yet something approaching what it really was.

"It is about Mr. Hammond," she said, with a slight gasp, "he is going to marry." It was difficult for a moment to draw her breath; yet she put a brave face upon it and succeeded in smiling after a little. "Well!" she said, the colour coming and going, "there is nothing extraordinary in that. I did not—expect—that he would remain—always——"

She stood up and met his eyes bravely, and smiled, but could not say any more.

"It is so; but it is worse than that. I don't know how to tell you."



"For a minute or more Elinor made no sign."

a real young man; but yet he was not old. He was not more than *al mezzo di cammin di nostra vita*. His eyes were still bright, his hair abundant, his step light and active. Elinor was ashamed of herself for having thought him old, and before the look which he now fixed upon her some instinct made her turn away her eyes.

"I cannot tell," he said, "what you will think. To me it is terrible. I hope, and yet I scarcely believe, that it will seem less to you. I told your uncle that before taking any step in the matter—before consenting to anything—he ought to let you know."

"What is it?" she said. The colour went out of her face; she turned to him, no longer abashed, trying to read the catastrophe in his eyes:

"Oh, it is not so hard!" she said, smiling again, "but I can't tell what my uncle should have to do with it," she said.

His face was so anxious, so pitiful, so full of troubled sympathy, that Elinor did not know what to think. She trembled in spite of herself. "I cannot guess any more," she cried, sharply, "tell me what it is."

"You are strong and brave," he said; she felt neither the one nor the other, yet gave him a nod of acquiescence in reply, "and you will need all your strength," he went on. "Elinor, it is concerning Mabel——"

He paused, for she gave a keen cry as if a spear had gone into her. The blow was like that, sharp, sudden, cutting to the heart. He

stopped short and said no more, and she threw up her arms with that unconscious gesture of despair which the theatre tries in vain to copy. The cry, the action, made it clear that he needed to say no more. After this she seated herself suddenly, and for a minute or more made no sign. He was deeply alarmed, and in his generous heart miserable in her misery, but he did not know what to do or say. At the end of the minute she looked at him again and smiled.

"I have news, too," she said. "I have a letter from my father. He is in America, and he wants me to join him. Will you tell me how we can travel quickest; the shortest way?"

"To America!" he said, with a tone of pain and dismay almost as sharp as her own.

"Yes. I have often thought he must be there; he writes to say we are to come at once—he wants—me."

Here Elinor stopped with a difficulty in getting out the word, then resumed hastily, with a laugh, "It suits very well, don't you think? For it would be very embarrassing for—them otherwise:—and I—and I——"

Her lips quivered. She did all she could to keep up the smile, but it was very rigid and ghastly. She could not enunciate another word, but gave him a hasty look which was half desperate valour and half the self-abandonment of a soul which could do no more. He sat down by her very gravely, and took her hand in his.

"I have never told you," he said, "what it is to me to have you here; if you go, it will be like

the daylight going and nothing left but night. Elinor, must it be?"

"My father wants me, Cousin Maurice." What he said of himself seemed to mean nothing to her. "My father wants me. I promised mamma on her deathbed—and I cannot—I cannot stay!" she said, with sudden passion, covering her face with her hands.

Mr. Fitzmaurice said little more: he was of the race of those *preux chevaliers*, rare at any time, rarer perhaps than ever now, to whom the comfort of those they love is the first object in life. He set himself to forward her will, when he found that he could do no better, and arranged everything with the greatest care and despatch, only making the condition that the father in America was first to be informed, and an answer obtained from him before the forlorn little party sailed. Yet not so forlorn; for, without saying a word on the subject, he arranged himself to go in the same vessel and look after them.

The following month was so full of preparations that Elinor had little time to think of the other event which was about to happen, which her uncle by this time, with many vain precautions, had intimated formally to her—"Since we knew that all was over, by mutual consent, between Mr. Hammond and yourself," General Percival wrote. Elinor was busy making the outfit for the children, preparing for the voyage, when this letter arrived. She never replied to it—where was the need, when she was so soon to be gone and far out of their way?

(To be continued.)

## Boyhood.

By J. LOGIE ROBERTSON.

THE fairy time of life, Jack,  
It's now the time of yore!  
And what a lovely world we lost  
When boyhood's hour was o'er!  
We crossed the burn that runs between  
That and the world of men:  
The lad that takes the leap, Jack,  
He ne'er gets back again.  
Away, away that fairy world  
Went floating whole and free;  
Its songs grew faint, its groves grew dim,  
The brook became a sea.  
And then the world of men, Jack,  
Called with an iron tone,  
And, waking from the dreams of youth,  
We were no more our own.  
Labour's great clanking engine-house  
Opened, and shut us in,

And long the memories of youth  
Were lost amidst the din.  
Time passed, and we grew older,  
Our elders passed away,  
And lads, as we had been, came in,  
Just taken from their play.  
Their country looks, so fresh and wild,  
They touched us into pain:  
The joys that we had lost, Jack,  
We lost them o'er again.  
But, ah! in vain we sigh, we search,  
We'll find it nevermore—  
The fairy world of boyhood  
We rambled in of yore!  
It's not upon the green hillside,  
Nor yet within the glen;  
The gate of boyhood's Eden, Jack,  
Is barred to bearded men.



# Sunday Talk.

NEW SERIES.

DECEMBER, 1884.

## Elinor.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

### CHAPTER VII.

ELINOR had made a discovery in the moment of her deepest calamity. There are fine sentimentalists who consider it a painful thing to find out that you are beloved when you are incapable of responding to the feeling—and a woman of heart and conscience must always be grieved to occasion suffering—but yet it is very doubtful whether such a revelation was ever made in a case where there existed no specially painful or revolting circumstances, without giving at least a passing gratification. It was a surprise to her, and yet after the first moment it was no surprise. She had been aware that there was a sympathy in the mind of Cousin Maurice which she had not found in any one before. He divined what she would do: he understood what she meant, as no one had ever done, not Philip even in the hey-day of their youthful attachment, when they seemed to have but one soul. Even then he had not understood her, and had been perplexed and puzzled by much she did, had thought her romantic, high-flown, and fully intended to abate her enthusiasm, and generally to tame her down, as soon as she should be his. Elinor, in the humility of her girlhood, had been willing to believe that Philip would mould her, that she would learn from him, and grow into a different creature through his influence. And so perhaps she might have done. She would no doubt have "lowered to his image day by day" had she become his wife at nineteen, and entered a household which was ruled by motives more sober and practical, as he would have said, than her own, but after the tremendous crisis in her life, in which Philip had forsaken her altogether, Elinor's ideas, too, had suffered a change. She had retained in her mind a vague expectation—rather a hope than an expectation, and yet scarcely warm enough for a hope—that some time his heart might turn to her, and he might perceive that the course she had adopted was the only one possible; but that had grown

fainter and fainter as the year passed on. And now, in the shock of what looked like a double treachery, his image in her mind was suddenly blurred and confused for ever; and as there was no longer any possibility of hoping that it might return to the gracious lines in which her imagination had drawn it, it began to appear to Elinor that he had never existed at all, save in that imagination, and never understood, never entered into her being at all. He and Mabel—Mabel, her little sister, for whom she had been so thankful that the cares and pains of life were to be spared her, whom she had torn herself from weeping, yet glad for the child's sake! Perhaps it was almost more bitter to think that Mabel thus replaced her without a pang, without a thought, and that everybody agreed "since all was over" that Elinor would have "no feeling" on the subject—this was almost more terrible to bear than the certainty that Philip's desertion of her was final. They all thought it reasonable that she should have "no feeling on the subject." This universal abandonment by public opinion, or rather by the opinion of friends, of almost every one who has made a great sacrifice, is one of the things most bitter to bear. Why should Elinor have any feeling on the subject? She had given Philip up for the children. She must have liked the children best—she had taken her own way, and she must expect that others, too, would take theirs. So philosophers will understand that this and that is inevitable, without being the less wounded by it; but Elinor was no philosopher, and the universal consent to set her aside—the conviction that it could now be nothing to her what happened, that she had taken her own way, and naturally liked that best, overwhelmed her with a pang beyond words. They had never understood her, then, from the first. She was to them all an obstinate and self-willed enthusiast, bent on her own way.

But now she knew that there was one who

knew better. She had felt it inarticulately all along—now she knew. He understood, let who would misconceive her. It was all evident to him—the anguish with which she had made up her mind to go to her father, the supreme anguish of the shock, which made her resolution to go to her father feel like a heaven-sent alternative. He understood even that she had no thought of himself, and was scarcely wounded by it, feeling it most natural that the faithful soul should have no thought of anything new, of any substitute or consolation. This he had accepted from the beginning, feeling that her heart was not one likely to change—taking it for granted that the love in his heart must be its own reward. That love was, above all things, a supreme approval of her, of her conduct, her motives, everything she did, and could bear personal loss so long as she lost nothing of her ideal excellence in his eyes. He was not a love-sick or selfish boy, but a serious man, who knew that there were many things in the world more great than that passion of Love, in whose name both men and women perform all manner of treacheries, and think themselves fully justified. He had loved her involuntarily, and had made no show of it, and expected no response; but he had not been able to keep out of his eyes that look, in which tender sympathy and compassion were lighted up by something warmer—something which Elinor understood, which had made her feel that sensation of moral support which gives to the sufferer more help and aid than anything else in the world.

All things seemed to return to their usual calm in the little house, while Elinor waited for her father's answer to the letter, in which she told him everything, and that she was ready to come to him, the sooner the better, with the three little boys and the baby, her destitute orphan family, for whom she had sacrificed her own life. Everything seemed to return to the peaceful order of the past, but this was little more than semblance, for already a hundred preparations had begun for the change which Elinor looked forward to as a relief, and was restlessly eager for, in order to escape from herself, and from the other preparations which she could not help hearing of—the arrangements for her sister's marriage. She, too, plunged at once, as Mabel was doing, into the bustle of a *trousseau*; but the *trousseau* of the little family setting out upon a voyage was very different from all the pleasant extravagance and commotion of the bride's outfit. Elinor and Nurse began to labour at the little garments which were necessary, without a day's delay. It had been thought wise to wait for an answer from Mr. Percival before setting out, that he might make all necessary arrangements on his side for their reception; but it was not necessary to postpone what had to be done at home to make

the children ready for their start the moment his letter should be received. Elinor plunged into this work with an energy that was feverish. It relieved her pain to cut up those breadths of long cloth—to shape, to sew, to contrive, to set all her wits to work how to get so many little garments out of one piece. It required a great deal of thought—happily, happy thought in so many cases—but sometimes, as in Elinor's, a stytic to staunch some hidden wound. While she was about this engrossing occupation, her little parlour full of little clothes and baskets of cut-out material, and her needle and scissors in ceaseless operation, Cousin Maurice would come and sit by her, and report to her what he had done, the inquiries he had made, his conclusions as to which was the best ship, the kindest captain, the greatest comfort for the voyage. He never dissuaded her; and she, for her part, began to long for his coming, to feel grateful to him for sitting by her, for making all those inquiries, for putting everything in train. And the children were always delighted to see him arrive. They climbed upon his knees, and on his shoulders, and all over him, making a sort of ladder or gymnastic apparatus of his long-suffering person. When they ran out to their play in the garden after vigorous exercise of this kind, he would take a book and ask leave to read to Elinor as she worked. The books he read were chiefly those he had brought to her about America, about the wild life in the backwoods, which was where her father had gone, and the necessity on the part of emigrants to work with their own hands, and how to be independent of the hired service which was not to be obtained. As he read, visions would come in before Elinor's eyes of the homely rude house, the constant work which would banish all thought, of the children growing up untaught, indeed, but having from their early years the habit of a larger, freer life; of the wide, silent horizons of an unknown country, the separation from all reminders of what she had suffered in the past. Oh, if but the parting were over, the new beginning made! She heard, without hearing, the pages which Mr. Fitzmaurice read. Tears would come into her eyes sometimes and blind her; and then she would turn her head and wipe those silent witnesses away. When the reading came to an end, she would sometimes thank the reader with a smile that went to his heart. "Oh, if we were but there," she would say.

"My dear, I wish you were not so willing to leave us," Mr. Fitzmaurice would reply.

"Not willing to leave you, Cousin Maurice. No words can ever say what you have done for the children and me."

"It is not a matter for words. I should like to be missed—a little."

"You only," said Elinor, "you only"—permitting the tears to start which were so near the

surface; "I shall not know how to get over the habit of looking for you."

He got up and walked about the room amid the four little heaps of little clothes. "I don't want you to get over that habit," he would say; but he never told her that he meant to be her guardian during the voyage, and to go with her to the unknown world.

They had speculated anxiously the time when Mr. Percival's answer would come, and had talked it all over a hundred times, and decided that there would just be time to catch the ship at Liverpool after it arrived. Mr. Fitzmaurice set out from his house to the cottage, walking across the park, on the forenoon of the day on which he knew the letter must have come. He walked slowly, and his face was very grave. Though he intended to go with her, he was yet well aware of the seriousness of the step. And he knew that it might not be possible for him to remain near her to shield off trouble from her in the new circumstances when she resumed her place by her father's side. That father, in all probability, would not tolerate his presence; and Elinor herself, it was almost certain, having no return to make him, would be uneasy and embarrassed if he expatriated himself for her sake. And he had duties at home which must call him even from her side. It was, therefore, with a heart full of despondency that he set out to receive the last definite orders, to speed her parting, to help her to take the step which would separate her from him for ever. These were not pleasant anticipations, even though the moment of farewell might not be yet.

He walked along with his head bowed down and his heart heavy, and so did not perceive till she was close upon him the subject of his thoughts, Elinor herself, hurrying along, as much abstracted and pre-occupied as he, with a face of deadly pallor and eyes that were widely opened with wonder and trouble, but scarcely seemed to see. He cried, "Elinor!" with wild surprise, suddenly stopping short, and she, too, stopped and looked at him, coming to herself, as it were, with a sort of shudder.

"What is the matter?" he said. "Something has happened—your father—?"

She gave him a woeful smile. "My father is quite well," she said. "I have got his letter. It is very strange—oh, very strange." Then the smile became a low laugh, which terrified him. "Marrying seems all that people are thinking of," she said.

"My dear child! don't laugh, when I can see you are in great trouble. Elinor, lean upon me; you are trembling; tell me what it is."

He drew her towards him, and in her misery she wept on his shoulder. "It is—that there is no home for us anywhere—that we have nowhere to go—nowhere to go," she said; "my father—". But here her voice was choked, and she could say no more.

He made her sit down upon the trunk of a fallen tree. They were in the midst of the park, in the soft glory of a summer morning, all green and fresh, all smiling and silent, not a creature near. When Elinor had overcome the paroxysm of feeling, her pale face reddened with shame, and she drew away from his support. "Oh," she said, "forgive me, it seemed too much to bear. But nothing is too much to bear when one must bear it and there is no escape."

Terrible philosophy for one so young to learn! and the faint flicker of a smile with which she looked up at him was almost too much for him on his side. She took the letter from her pocket and gave it to him to read, watching his countenance while he did so. This was what Mr. Percival said—

DEAR ELINOR,—Your letter surprised me very much, and annoyed me not a little; what does it all mean, and what have you been thinking about? Your uncle and Bromley and every one must have been behaving like fools to let you act as you say you have done; and I that thought you were safely established in life, and in a position to be a real help and protection to your brothers and sisters! I must say that such a discovery is very hard upon me. As for coming out here, as you propose, I don't see how that can be done. No doubt when I wrote to you last I suggested that one of your sisters might come to keep my house; but that has become unnecessary since, for, for once in my life, a piece of real good fortune has come in my way. A lady of great personal attractions, and with a little property—which is extremely convenient in present circumstances—has done me the honour to accept my hand. We shall be married before this reaches you. At such a moment the arrival of a whole family, such as you propose to bring upon me, would be very much out of place, and I must decline to receive you at once and peremptorily. Since it is evident that you owe the burden upon you solely to your own hot-headedness, I do not see that it is necessary for me to step in and relieve you from the consequences of your folly. Remain where you are, since you have a home, and be thankful. I will send you a little money for the boys' schooling when I find I can spare it. Love to the children.—Your affectionate father, J. P.

He read it, and folded it up carefully in its former folds, before he looked up. She watched him with quivering lips, with a wistful longing for sympathy, for compassion, for understanding, such as he alone seemed able to give. Was even he failing now?

"You see," she said, speaking with difficulty, "that all is over, Cousin Maurice. No going away, no new life. You must just bear with me and the children; we must live on—we can't help it—dependent. Oh, I did not think it was to be always so! I thought at least I might do something—I thought I might be—"

Her voice was choked. She made an appealing gesture to him, and hid her face in her hands.

"Elinor," he said, "you must not expect sympathy from me to-day. I have not crossed you, have I? I have tried to help you to do what you thought your duty. I meant to have



gone with you, though you were not to know. But now that it is all over you can't expect me to be sorry. I meant to throw over all my duties, my dear, that you might do yours."

She uncovered her face with a tremulous cry, and looked at him. He proceeded, without looking at her, gravely telling his tale.

"I should have gone with you," he went on, "not for your sake, but for mine. It is not your fault, my dear, but things have fallen so, and I have come to that pass that I cannot live without you, Elinor."

His voice was perfectly calm and serious, without any passion in it. He was telling her the simple facts without any comment. He

added at the end, "It is not your fault, my dear."

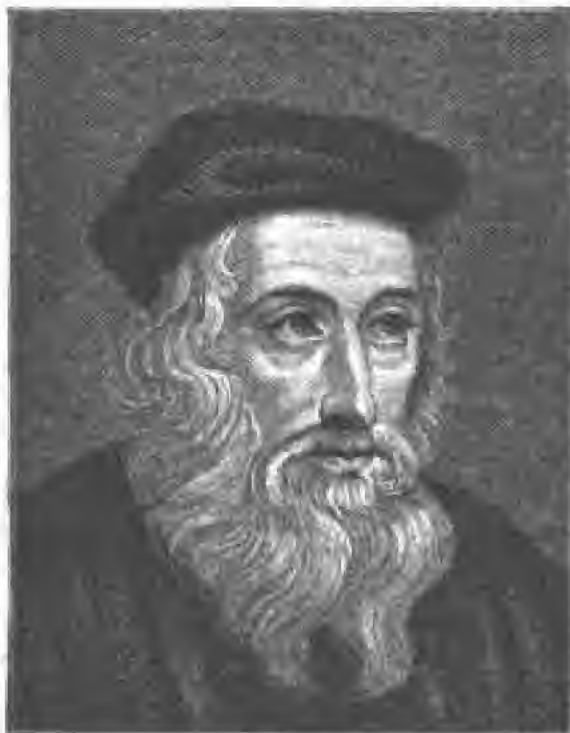
"Cousin Maurice," she replied, after a moment, faltering, "I don't know what to say to you. There seemed no one in the world who cared."

"There is some one who cares above everything; and there is a new world nearer than America, Elinor. I can't be sorry—I think Providence must have done it for my sake—so long as there is any hope that it may ever seem so to you."

It did not seem so to her that day, nor for many days after; but yet it is strange indeed when honest love does not triumph in the end.

THE END.

## Centenary Portraits.



JOHN WICLIFFE.  
Born 1324. Died December 31st, 1384.



SAMUEL JOHNSON.  
Born 18th September, 1709. Died 13th December, 1784.

## *"In Excelsis Gloria."*

WHEN Christ was born of Mary free,  
In Bethlehem, in that fair citie,  
Angels sang there with mirth and glee,  
*In Excelsis Gloria!*

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright,  
To them appearing with great light,  
Who said, "God's Son is born this night,"  
*In Excelsis Gloria!*

This King is come to save mankind,  
As in Scripture truths we find,  
Therefore this song have we in mind,  
*In Excelsis Gloria!*

Then, dear Lord, for Thy great grace,  
Grant us the bliss to see Thy face,  
That we may sing to Thy solace,  
*In Excelsis Gloria!*

—Old English Carol (1600?) in *British Museum*.